

A HIGHBURY PUBLICATION

VOLUME 1

RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION

THE BEST OF 24 ISSUES OF games™ RETRO

THE GREATEST GAMES EVER

VIDEOGAMES THAT INFLUENCED A GENERATION

SIX OF THE BEST

THE BEST GAMES ON EVERY FORMAT

VIDEOGAME HISTORY LOOKBACK

FROM PONG TO POKÉMON TO THE PRESENT DAY

PLUS CLASSIC ADS FROM YESTERYEAR!

FOREWORD BY ROGER KEAN

HARDWARE

RETRO GAMING CLASSICS

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THE PIONEERS OF GAMES

CLASSIC GAME SYSTEM BUYERS' GUIDE

RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION

games™'s Retro section has celebrated the world of retro gaming for two years, and takes much of its look and feel from classic Spectrum magazine *Crash*. So who better to write the foreword for this Retro book, a compilation of the best bits from the first 24 issues of games™ Retro, than Roger Kean, the original editor of *Crash* back in 1984?

Twenty years ago, as I write this – still sitting in Ludlow, Shropshire, where it all happened – I was putting the finishing touches to *Crash* 12, the Christmas issue, and looking back at a year's worth of magazines. In that time our company, Newsfield, had moved from my cramped home to a three-floor building in the centre of the town, and grown from a staff of four to twelve. We were still a way off the infamous *Crash* 19 that lampooned *Sinclair User*. That landed us with a lawsuit from publisher EMAP (settled out of court), but – thanks to our partisan readership – it rocketed *Crash* to the leadership of games magazine sales.

But the real success story of *Crash* belongs to the editorial team. At the time it seemed such an incredibly simple idea to let the target market for Spectrum games write the reviews that it was amazing no other publisher had thought of it. Add to that the notion of getting three or four youngsters on each game for impartiality and choice of opinion and you had the perfect review machine.

Although the pool of games players came from all over the locale, it was Ludlow School's luck to be in the firing line, and it produced an extraordinary stream of talented players… and sometimes even a wordsmith or two. Among the early ones Chris Passey, Matthew Uffindell, Robin Candy and Nick Roberts remain memorable. Within the year, the great and mighty of the games industry made the back-road, tractor-laden trek to Shropshire to seek the counsel of these worldly-wise 14-year-old games gurus. Everyone appeared occasionally on the telly, Matthew and Robin several times in selected yoof shows; it is testament to the quiet, calm cynicism of Lloyd Mangram that the boys retained their sanity… Well, most of it.

It's a sobering thought that what the advertisers called the 'target demographic group' (boys of 13-15 years old with substantial pocket money) who read those issues of *Crash* are now thirty-somethings with kids of their own. Do their sons or daughters think much of the old Speccy games? And why is retro gaming as popular as it is? The answer to the first question is, probably not – unless, of course, seeing Dad play *Lunar Jetman* on a Spectrum emulator, they recognise the game's intrinsic qualities. As to the second question, well that's probably plain old nostalgia – a whiff of lost youth and innocence. Or, for the first videogame generation, is it more – the pride of being the first of a tribe?

It has to be said that at *Crash* Towers we all hovered between two extremes. On one hand there was a sense of disbelief that we were all about a set of blobs, triangles, squares and 'laser' lines pretending to be real objects; on the other, amazement that programmers squashed so much action into the 48K rubber box. If ever we doubted what we were talking about, Oliver Frey's magnificent covers painted the reality for us. His '*Star Wars* trench' cover artwork for the June '84 issue is a great example – one day, we knew, the graphics would really look like this.

Now, to a great degree, they do, but the gameplay hasn't changed very much. Improved graphics provide a better sense of 'being there', heightened realism and a greater visual enjoyment, but they don't necessarily make a better game. It's almost as if during the decade of Spectrum gaming (and, dare I say it, the Commodore 64), every idea that exists had been developed. Later machines, with dedicated graphics and sound chips, and massively expanded memory have made the gaming experience more visceral, but development of ideas – at least of the platform game – seemed to stop at Sega's *Sonic*.

It's not difficult to imagine what Software Projects' *Jet Set Willy* or Ultimate's *Atic Atac* would have been like if programmers Matthew Smith and the Stamper brothers had enjoyed today's development systems and a PlayStation2 or Xbox to play them on. But they didn't, and so their triumph is that they made something incredible with what they had, and all for under six quid. We were spoiled! Of course, there was rubbish too, and plenty of it, but then, there still is… and it costs a lot, lot more.

So retro gaming is here to stay, and that's not so surprising since history always has a value. And whether you retro game for old time's sake, or for the sheer joy those games engendered, or because, like Peter Pan, you can't let go and grow up with an Xbox, it doesn't matter. The point of any computer game is to beat the game, and just because it's 20 years old doesn't mean that the game can't still beat you. Or perhaps you're just a games anthropologist, which, as Lloyd would say, is a very long word.





■ *Roger Kean was the original editor of Crash magazine and one of the founders of Newsfield Publications, which also published ZZap!64, Amtix, LM and The Games Machine.*

■ *Cover artwork courtesy of Oliver Frey, used with kind permission.*

Contents

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN OVER 20 YEARS IN THE MAKING… 24 ISSUES OF gamesTM RETRO CONDENSED INTO ONE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE GREATEST GAMES AND HARDWARE EVER









◀ For most people the Spectrum or Commodore 64 was their introduction to the world of gaming. Both are still fondly remembered, and often played.



▶ Sega's Saturn was actually more powerful than the PlayStation, just not as popular.





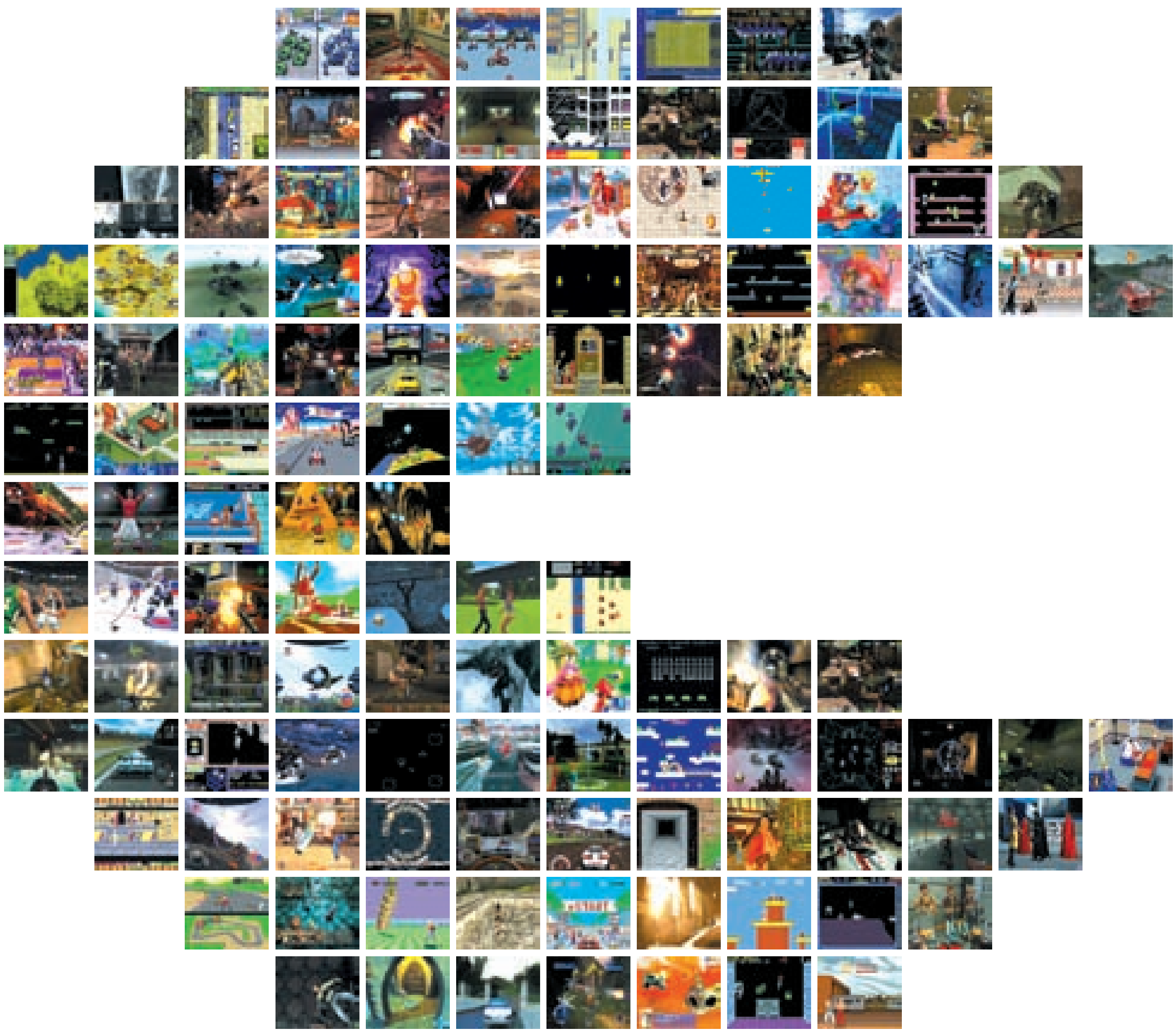


HANDHELD GAMING

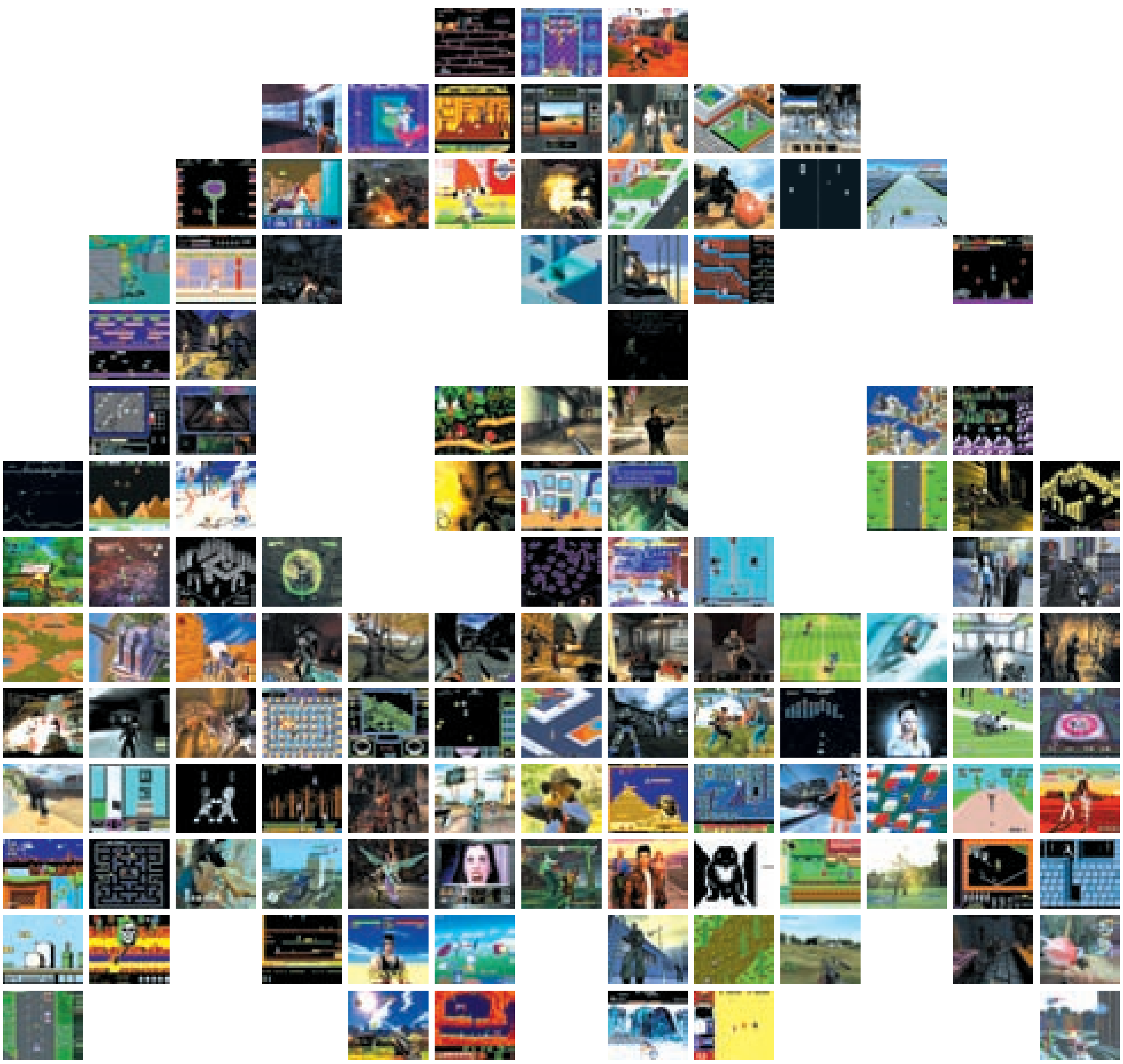
▼ Everyone loves the Game Boy. It's still the world's top handheld console.



ARCADE GAMING



INSERT COIN



IN THE BEGINNING…

For many, the 8-bit computers and consoles represent true retro gaming and there won't be many gamers over the age of 30 who didn't cut their teeth on an Atari 2600 or ZX81. Sure, there are plenty of games that no longer hold the same magic for us that they did in our youth, but that's true of any system. For now we're more than happy to simply celebrate when gaming began for a great many people.

8-Bit

We'd need a separate book to cover every 8-bit machine ever released, so instead we'll be concentrating on the more popular systems that many of you may have owned when you were a nipper. The Spectrum 48K, Nintendo Entertainment System and Commodore 64 are just a few of the machines covered in this section and it's incredibly satisfying to look back at the likes of *Jet Set Willy* and *Dizzy* and see just how far our beloved pastime has come.

Compiling this part of the book brought back many fond memories; from those playground arguments over who had the best computer to remembering the first time we played *Manic Miner*. Hopefully, looking over the following pages will fill you with the same nostalgia.

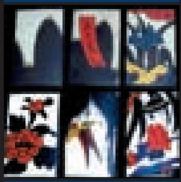


Lloyd Mangram's

Videogames history lookback

TAKE A STEP BACK IN TIME WITH ME, LLOYD MANGRAM, AS I DELVE INTO THE DEEP, DARK BEGINNINGS OF VIDEOGAME HISTORY. I WILL SHARE WITH YOU THE HIGHS AND THE LOWS, THE TEARS AND THE LAUGHTER, THE E.T.S AND THE VICE CITIES. OF COURSE, IT'S A STORY YOU ALREADY KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT, BUT I BET YOU'LL FIND A FEW SURPRISES IN HERE TOO. SO SIT BACK, RELAX AND FOLLOW THE ARROWS FOR THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF VIDEOGAMES

1889 A card game business was set up in Japan by Fusajiro Yamauchi of Manufuku Co.



1947 The Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Co. was launched. It is later renamed Sony.



SONY

1951 The card company calls itself Nintendo Playing Card Co. It means 'Leave Luck To Heaven'.

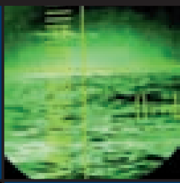
SEGA

Nintendo GAMING 24:7.

1954 US war veteran David Rosen exported pinball to Japan. His company is SErvices GAmes – Sega.

1961 The videogame was born – *Space War*. It was the size of four filing cabinets.

1966 Sega released its first hit game in Japan. Called *Periscope* it was a submarine sim.



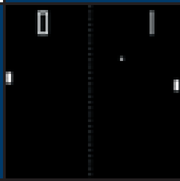
1971 Nolan Bushnell devised the first commercial arcade game, *Computer Space*. It flopped.



Nolan tried again with *Pong*, but Bally/Midway refused to release it. So he set up his own games company – Atari.

ATARI

1972 *Pong* was a success and inspired many to copy the formula, including Bally/Midway.





Magnavox launched the first home system, The Odyssey. It plays *Pong* and Magnavox sued Atari, claiming it invented the game.



The first videogame peripheral was released – an electronic rifle for the Odyssey to play *Shooting Gallery*.



1973 Atari followed up its success with *Space Race* where starships whizzed through asteroids.

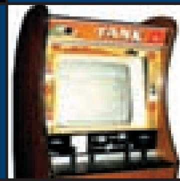
Nakamura Manufacturing Company was set up – the name was eventually shortened to Namco.

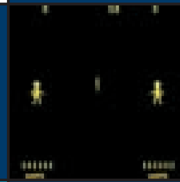
namco

1974 The first game with a steering wheel was a big hit. *Gran Trak 10* was, yes, from Atari.



A major breakthrough in gaming technology – the invention of the ROM chip. *Tank* was the first game to have graphics on ROM.

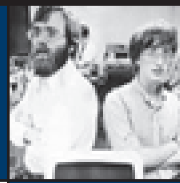




1975 Atari employee Steve Jobs designed *Breakout* with Steve Wozniak. They went on to set up Apple.



The first shoot-'em-up was released by Midway. *Gun Fight* was one of the first games to use a microprocessor.



Bill Gates wrote a BASIC compiler for the Altair computer with Paul Allen. They formed a new firm – Microsoft.

The Z80 microprocessor was created by Zilog. It became standard for arcade and home computer systems.



1976 The first game to be created in Japan was a boxing sim, *Heavyweight Champ*, by Sega.



The first game to court controversy was *Death Race* by Exidy. It involved running people over with fast cars.



1977 Nintendo launched its first home videogame system. It played *Ping-Pong* and worked in colour.



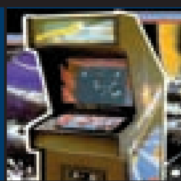
With gaming systems breaking through into homes, Atari got in on the act with its tasteful teak-effect VCS system.



1978 Obviously embarrassed by the teak-effect, Atari launched its 400 and 800 series computers.

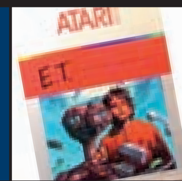


The hits kept on coming from Atari. *Asteroids* uses vector graphics to create a spaceship in an asteroid field.

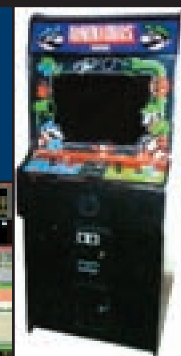


Pac-Man was released in Japan but called *Puck-Man*. The name was later changed to deter 'witty' graffiti…

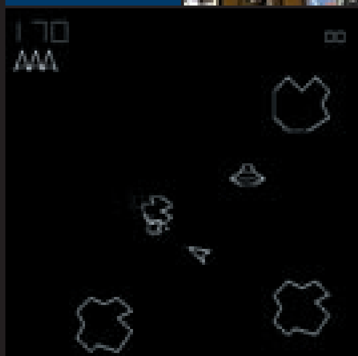
Atari paid $21m for the rights to *E.T.* The game is so bad that thousands of copies were buried in a remote desert.

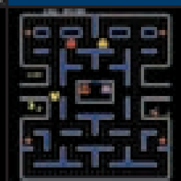


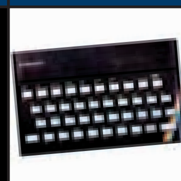
Eventually to appear on every console Nintendo ever made, *Mario Bros* got its debut in the arcades. Turtle cruelty ahoy!



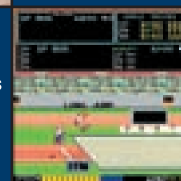
The Apple Mac computer launched this year. The Mac 128K was a little diferent to the Mac I'm typing on now.

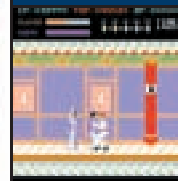






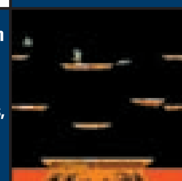
Williams's *Joust* was a two-player winner. It encouraged players to team up on one level then compete on the next.



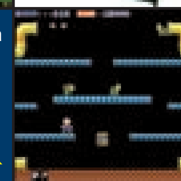




1982 New from Sinclair, the ZX Spectrum boasted eight colours, but only allowed two per 8x8 square.

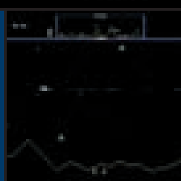


The game that broke a thousand joysticks when it arrived on home computers – *Track & Field* was released in arcades.



Many 10ps were spent on *Kung-Fu Master* in 1984. The simple but infuriating gameplay still has people hooked today.

A big shock for Atari – its four best game creators left at the same time to set up their own company, Activision.



The first computer from Sinclair Research, the ZX80, was launched and brought BASIC to the masses.



1983 Sega's first home console arrived this year. The SG-1000 was 4-bit and came with a small joystick.



Bally/Midway's *SpyHunter* was an instant hit. Fast cars, machine guns, spiky wheels – this game had it all.



ACTIVISION

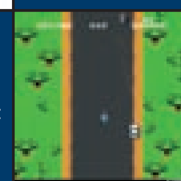
Williams's *Defender* took arcade gaming to the next level with side-scrolling levels and a map showing enemy locations.



A new PC computer was launched this year by IBM. The keyboard and mouse set-up soon became standard.



Vector graphics games were really taking off in the arcades. The greatest ever has to be *Star Wars* from Atari.

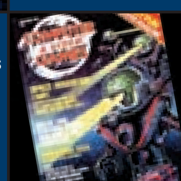


A new look for *Pac-Man* too – *PacLand* was tied in with a cartoon series and gave Pac-Man a whole personality.

1979 At last, some serious competition for Atari – Mattel's Intellivision ('intelli-gent television').



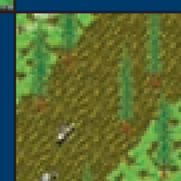
1981 Home computers really took off this year. The Commodore Vic 20 was blessed with a massive 3.5K RAM.

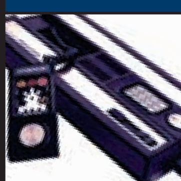


In an era when arcade games had small sprites for graphics, *Dragon's Lair* on laser disc was phenomenal.



JetPac was the first game from Ultimate (now Rare), who went on to create some of the greatest games of all time.

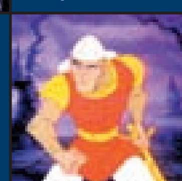




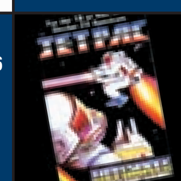
1980 The first handheld from Nintendo and kids went crazy for it. The Game & Watch is still around today.



The grandaddy of all modern videogames magazines launched in November with a *Space Invaders* cover. How time flies…

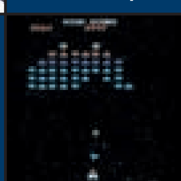


The Vic 20 and non-starter Commodore 16 were soon superseded by the Commodore 64. The 8-bit race was on!



Cashing in on the *Star Wars* hype, *Return Of The Jedi* arcade was a departure from the original's vector graphics look.

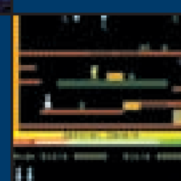
Meanwhile over in the arcades a legend was born. *Space Invaders* caused a coin shortage in the States.



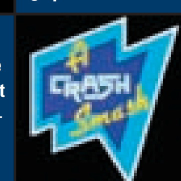
Sir Clive Sinclair was quick to follow up with the ZX81, complete with a new membrane keyboard and better BASIC.



The first game to use a trackerball control system in the arcades, *Marble Madness* from Atari, was a blast.



1984 *Crash* magazine showed the world that gaming could be fun – no long listings here, just lots of games.





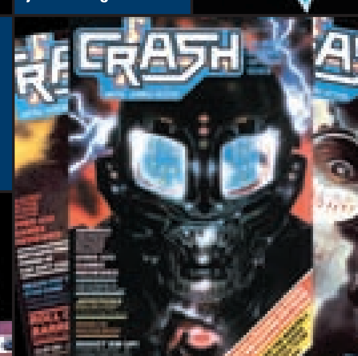
Galaxian picked up on the *Space Invaders* craze and became the first colour arcade game. Revolutionary.

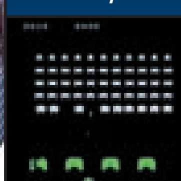


Meanwhile over at Konami they were creating their own classics. *Frogger* taught a generation to look both ways.

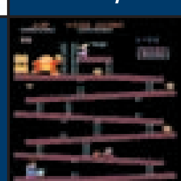


Written by Matthew Smith, *Manic Miner* was followed by *Jet Set Willy*. Both games still have a strong fanbase today.

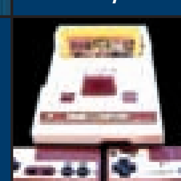




Nintendo's legendary developer Shigeru Miyamoto created *Donkey Kong*, starring an Italian plumber, Mario.



Nintendo's first serious contender for the home gaming crown, the Famicom, became the NES outside Japan.



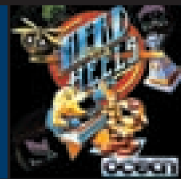
Lloyd Mangram's

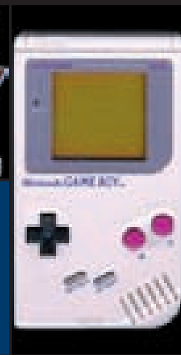
videogames history lookback

Sega launched its 8-bit Master System in the US. Later models came with an *Alex Kidd* game built in!

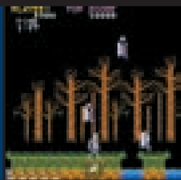


Written by Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond for Ocean, *Head Over Heels* allowed you to switch between characters.



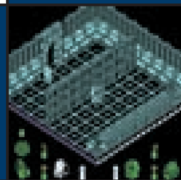


1984 was the year Commodore launched a new computer in the US. The Amiga kick-started the 16-bit era in home gaming.

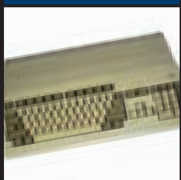


Created by Alexey Pajitnov, *Tetris* went on to appear on every format known to man. This is Atari's arcade version.

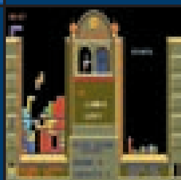
Arguably the most popular of all Sega arcade games, *OutRun* was Yu Suzuki's follow up to *Hang-On* and *Space Harrier*.



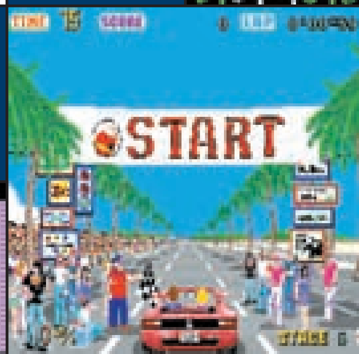
The sequel to *Bubble Bobble*, *Rainbow Islands* was an enchanting game where you could climb on rainbows.

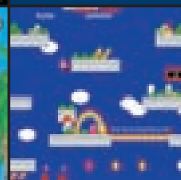


Capcom's *Ghosts 'n Goblins* starred a knight who fought the undead. If he got hit, he had to fight on in his underwear.



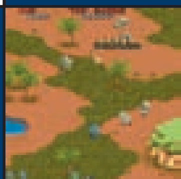
This year Acclaim became Nintendo's first US developer. Sadly, it announced its bankruptcy in late 2004.





Nintendo concentrated on the handheld market. The Game Boy launched and went on to sell 120 million.

This was the year for great arcade games that were converted to home systems. *Paperboy*, *Bombjack* and *1942* were great.

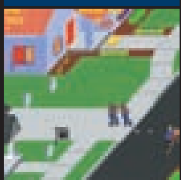


Atari chose to return to the vector splendour of the *Star Wars* for *The Empire Strikes Back*. Strangely, it came out after the *Jedi* game.

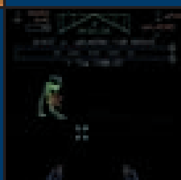


Taito's classic shoot-'em-up *R-Type* set the standard that many games followed. It went on to spawn several sequels.





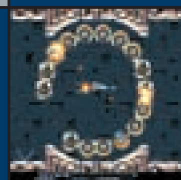
Multiformat games really took off with arcade, Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions. *Commando* was a big hit.



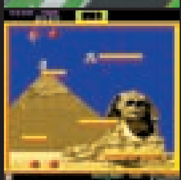
It wasn't all violence in the arcades though, *Bubble Bobble*'s Bub and Bob won many gamers' hearts.

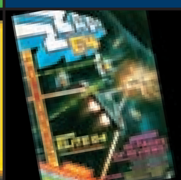


This year Activision became the first console developer to create a game for two systems at the same time.

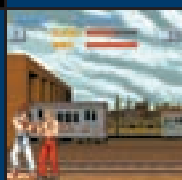


1989 Sega got a jump on Nintendo and released the 16-bit Mega Drive, known as Genesis in the US.





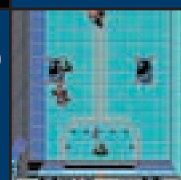
Arguably more popular in the home on the Spectrum and C64 than the arcade, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* was a great beat-'em-up.

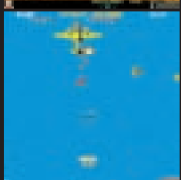


Cashing in on the skateboarding craze, Atari's *720°* gave you a challenging skatepark to tackle at high speed.

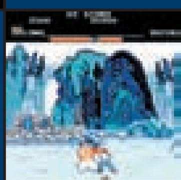


Everyone's favourite pill chomper went 3D in 1987. *Pacmania* had all the classic gameplay elements of the original.

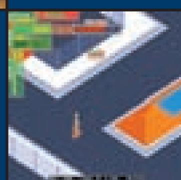




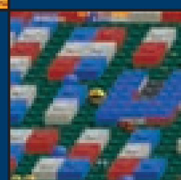
After the success of *Crash*, upstart publisher Newsfield repeated the formula with *Zzap! 64* for the Commodore 64.



Capcom couldn't have known that its *Street Fighter* game would be the first of almost 30 arcade versions.

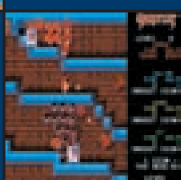


The Oliver twins' Dizzy burst onto the Spectrum. He had a good run until Codemasters and the Olivers fell out.

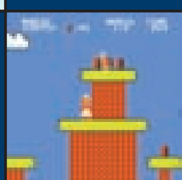


The Bitmap Brothers' *Speedball* caused quite a stir with its ultra-violent twist on the traditional football game.

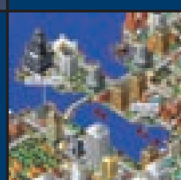
1985 Atari followed Commodore's lead this year with the Atari ST – both systems made it to the UK in 1987.



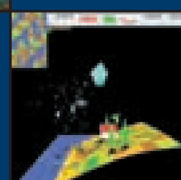
1986 The NES finally broke into the US and UK this year, bringing the great *Super Mario Bros* with it.



Another arcade hit for Sega – *Enduro Racer* came in a sit-on version where you had to pull the bike up to make jumps.



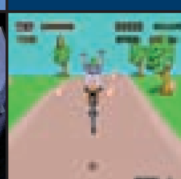
APB was one of the first free-roaming driving games. Its humorous police chases made for an addictive game.



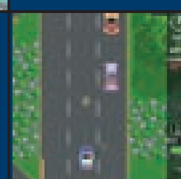


Four-player gaming in the arcades was popularised by Atari's *Gauntlet*. A game of ghosts, keys and running around.



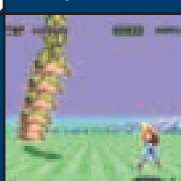


Maxis released *Sim City* on the PC. The game gave everyone the chance to play at being a town planner – compelling stuff!

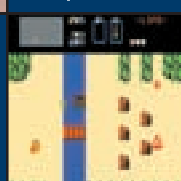


There were big-name Amiga games around in 1988. *Virus*, written by David Braben, boasted a fascinating 3D landscape.

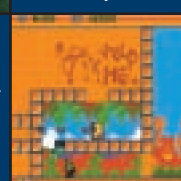
Sega rocked the arcade world by fitting full-motion cockpits to its games. *Space Harrier* was the first to benefit.

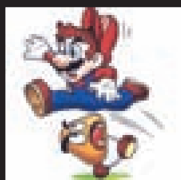


1987 A new hero was born this year – Link. The *Zelda* games were an addictive adventure maze.

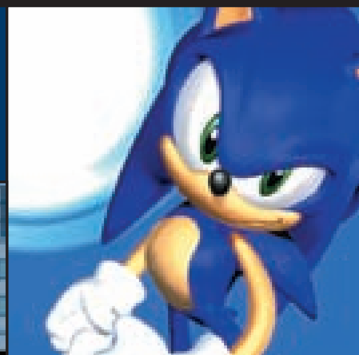


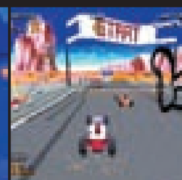
1988 A big arcade hit this year for Taito – *The New Zealand Story* gave a little kiwi the limelight.





1991 Sonic was hot on Mario's tail this year in a Mega Drive game that left the rest standing.

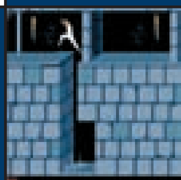




It may have all started with *Wolfenstein*, but *Doom* was the game that really put id and first-person shooters on the map.

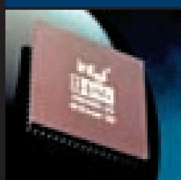


At last PCs were starting to become serious game-playing kit. The advent of the 486 processor was a turning point.

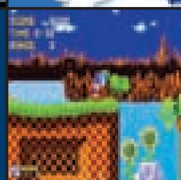


The first person shoot-'em-up was invented by id Software. *Wolfenstein* was a big smash on Nazi-hating PCs everywhere.





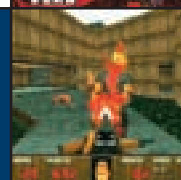
First released on the 386 PC, *Prince of Persia* by Jordan Mechner boasted some of the most fluid animation yet.



1992 Sega launched its *Virtua* series with *Virtua Racing* by AM2. It used polygons for the first time.

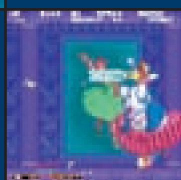


1993 The age of the failed console. 3DO was a powerful machine, but it just never took off.



Electronic Arts bought Bullfrog this year and was well on the way to establishing EA as a major games force.

Activision was the first company to release a game on a CD-ROM. It's *Manhole* for the PC. It wasn't very successful.



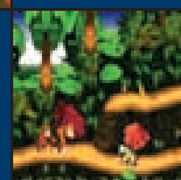
Irem's *Bomberman* brought out a vicious streak. The simple but addictive gameplay was soon converted to all consoles.

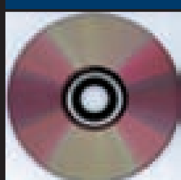


Zelda from Nintendo got a major 16-bit update on the SNES. *The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past* is a legendary game.

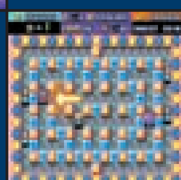


Atari had lost its grip on the games world. Its Jaguar was a 64-bit console, but with lacklustre, 8-bit-quality games.

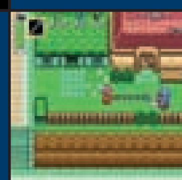




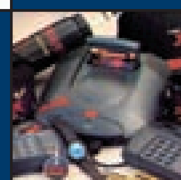
Konami's *Parodius* was a shoot-'em-up with a bizarre twist. The big bosses were dancing pandas and leggy blondes.



Sony and Nintendo were in talks to produce a SNES CD. When talks broke down, Sony created the PlayStation.



The first Pentium processor turned up the heat on PC gaming. PC games finally had the speed to compete.



Rare was doing great things with the SNES. *Donkey Kong Country* had 3D sprites and played brilliantly.

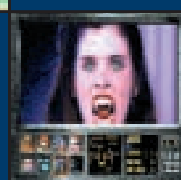
The very first WWF game was released in the arcade. *WWF Superstars* by Technos went down well with fans.



Nintendo tried to sue Codemasters for its Game Genie cheat code device. It lost the case and crafty cheaters rejoiced.

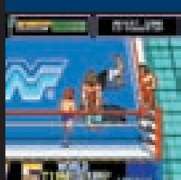


'Finish Him!' and 'Fatality' were the phrases of the moment as Midway's *Mortal Kombat* took over the arcades.

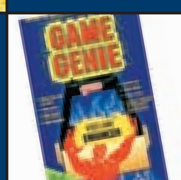


Fighting games moved from 2D to 3D with Sega's *Virtua Fighter*. Button bashing had never been so much fun.

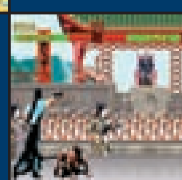




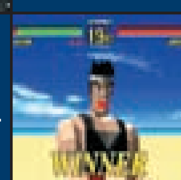
Laser games were still proving popular in arcades with *Mad Dog McCree* adding a nifty lightgun to the package.



Sid Meier's *Civilization* gave would-be Napoleans the chance to build their empires this year.



Sega launched the Mega-CD and we were promised 'interactive movies'. *NightTrap* was nearly banned.

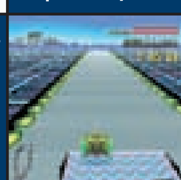


1994 One of the most popular PC games of all time – *Myst*. It's a bit like playing a set of postcards.

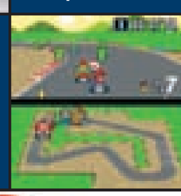
Peter Molyneux and Bullfrog created their first God sim. *Populous* on the 16-bit computers made us all power-mad.



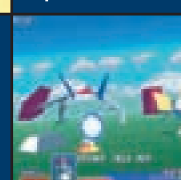
DMA Design's death-defying *Lemmings* was an unexpected hit on computers. Still an original game today.

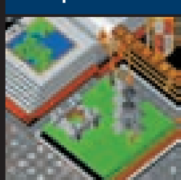


Take a popular plumber and put him on a go-kart – the result? An addictive mix – *Super Mario Kart* on SNES.

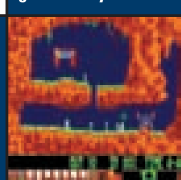


Namco was onto a winner in the arcades with its new racing game. *Ridge Racer* was fast and furious.



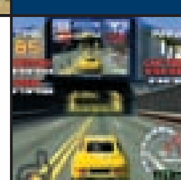


Over in Japan, Nintendo was launching its 16-bit Super Nintendo. It took until 1991 to launch in the UK.



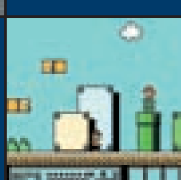
Gamers were wowed by the amazing Mode 7 on their SNES that gave games a 3D look. *F-Zero* was fast as well…



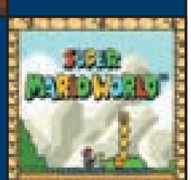


The SNES went 3D with the Super-FX chip. Argonaut's *Starfox* was the first game to move into another dimension.

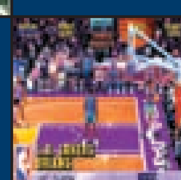
1990 One of the most popular NES games of all time was released this year – *Super Mario Bros 3*.



Super Mario World on the SNES brought the plumber's adventures into the 16-bit era. It was a mammoth game.



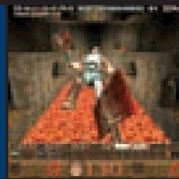
Another first from Midway – *NBA Jam* took basketball and added extra twists and quirks to make an addictive game.

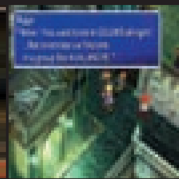


Lloyd Mangram's

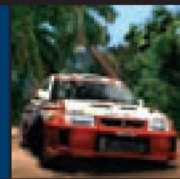
videogames history lookback

id Software did it again with *Quake* on the PC. The game was a massive hit on the new-fangled internet.





Starfox got an N64 update but strangely had to be called *Lylat Wars* in Europe for legal reasons. Foxes nonplussed.



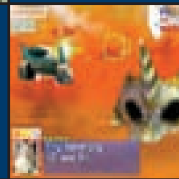
An arcade collaboration between Rare, Nintendo and Midway – *Killer Instinct*. Rare's only arcade game.

But Sony's new PlayStation tapped into the clubbing culture sweeping the nation and stole first place from Sega.

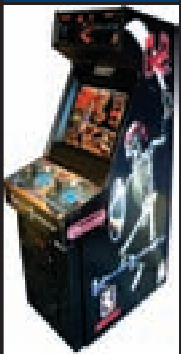




Final Fantasy VII was finally released on the PlayStation and sold 2 million copies in three days in Japan.

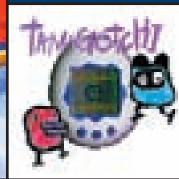


New standards were set in racing with Polyphony Digital and Sony's *Gran Turismo* on the PlayStation.

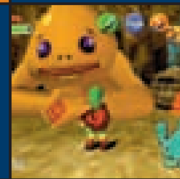




There were great rumblings in the PC world. Microsoft launched Windows 95 – DOS was dead, everyone rejoiced.



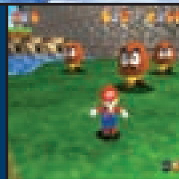
The House of the Dead popularised lightgun games. Sega produced two sequels, one involved typing.



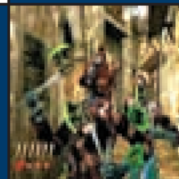
1995 The next wave of console wars began this year. Sega Saturn was more powerful than PlayStation.



1.6 million N64s were sold in the first three months, most of them with a copy of *Super Mario 64* – Mario had gone 3D.

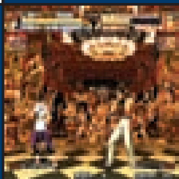


1997 Japan gave us the Tamagotchi and started the Pokémon craze. We're still trying to catch 'em all…



Zelda: Ocarina of Time on N64 made more money than any Hollywood movie over the Christmas period.

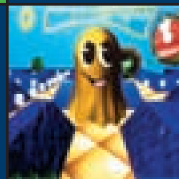
Bub and Bob, stars of *Bubble Bobble*, were back. *Puzzle Bobble* was a simple bubble-bursting game, but highly addictive.



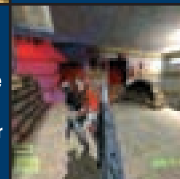
After a long run with Nintendo, Squaresoft announced that its next *Final Fantasy* game would be on PlayStation only.



Eidos launched *Tomb Raider* as a Sega Saturn exclusive. Eventually it became the game that sold PlayStation.

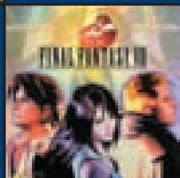


Rare and Nintendo scored a big hit with *GoldenEye 007* on the N64. The game is seen as a multiplayer masterpiece.

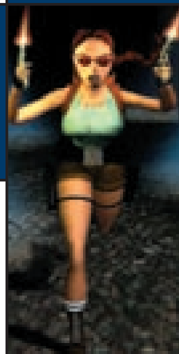




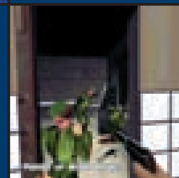
The 2D beat-'em-up was kept alive by SNK and the *King of Fighters* series. It was a massive hit on the Neo-Geo console.



1996 But Nintendo made a good comeback with the Nintendo 64, originally named the Ultra 64.

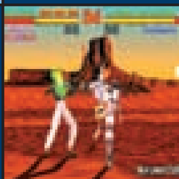


Virtual Reality was the buzz phrase of the moment. Even Pac-Man got a VR game. It didn't catch on.

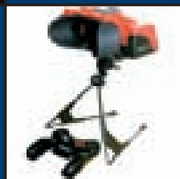


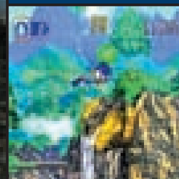
1998 At last, an FPS with a good storyline and less repetitive action. *Half-Life* was a console and PC hit.

Sensible Software had a real hit on its hands with *Cannon Fodder* on the Amiga. Little graphics but big on gameplay.

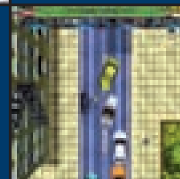


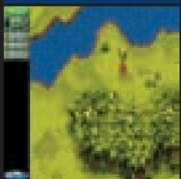
Sega Rally Championship was a hit with arcade driving fans. The corner slides were loads of fun.



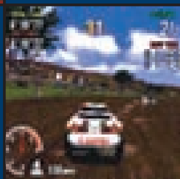


The Saturn was struggling to compete against the PlayStation, despite great games like *Panzer Dragoon*.

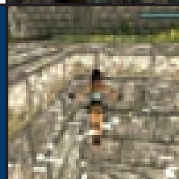


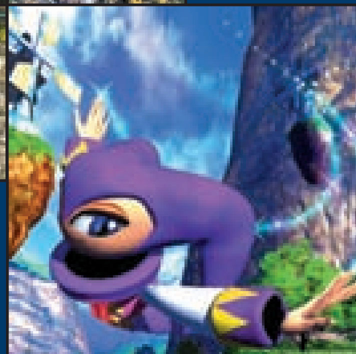


Namco stole the fighting game crown from Sega with *Tekken* and the two have been slogging it out ever since.

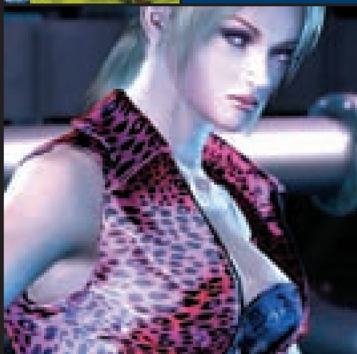


At last, Nintendo screwed up. The Virtual Boy was a 3D console that never saw the light of day outside Japan.

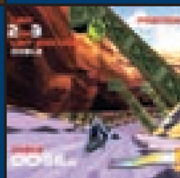




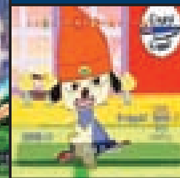
Grand Theft Auto caused a stir. Questions about its violent content were asked in Parliament.



Street Fighter was going strong. The most popular version to date is probably the *Street Fighter Alpha* series.

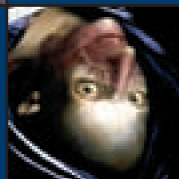


Capcom invented a new genre – the survival horror game. *Resident Evil* on the PlayStation scared us all witless.

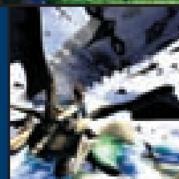




The PlayStation set new standards in console gaming. *WipEout* from Psygnosis was a speed rush.



Sega's Saturn had the first analogue joypad on a console and *NiGHTS* made great use of it with flying and stunts.



A lyrical dog got everyone button-bashing on their PlayStations in *Parappa The Rapper*. Word up.



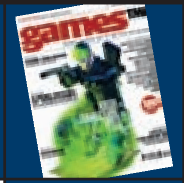
Sega's *Ferrari F355 Challenge* was an arcade machine with three screens and claimed to be very realistic.

Another update for the Game Boy – Game Boy Advance gave us PlayStation quality games on the go.





The Xbox Live system gave players the opportunity to actually talk to each other using a mic while playing.





2002 A new player entered the console war – Microsoft Xbox was the first console with a hard drive.



Paragon Publishing launched **games**™ and created the definitive history of videogames from 1889 to 2002.

Konami and Hideo Kojima took the *Metal Gear Solid* series to new heights on the PlayStation.



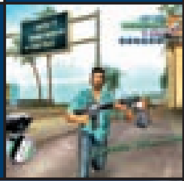
The *Virtua* series moved from beat-'em-ups to sports games. *Virtua Tennis* is still seen as one of the best.



Jet Set Radio on Dreamcast was the first cel-shaded videogame and mixed it with unique gameplay.

Dreamcast

Bungie created the game of the year with *Halo* on Xbox. No-one had ever seen graphics like these on a console before.

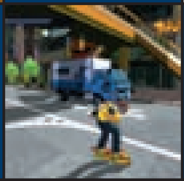




Konami was trying to get everyone dancing in arcades with its *Dance Dance Revolution* games. Shake your thang.



2001 *Conker's Bad Fur Day* on N64 was a first for Nintendo – a game with some bad language.



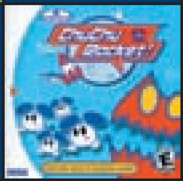
Sega announced that it was discontinuing the Dreamcast and would become a software developer instead.



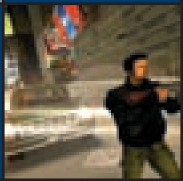
Rare continued to work its magic for Nintendo. *Banjo-Kazooie* on the N64 was a lively and fun platform game.

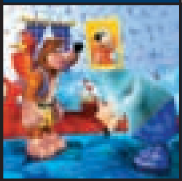


2000 Sony brought out the big guns to see off Sega. The PlayStation2 set new sales records.



PlayStation2 was thriving on sequels to great PSone games. *Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec* was fantastic.

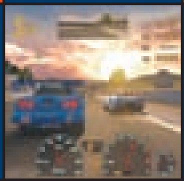




The Dreamcast had a unique add-on – the VMU (Visual Memory Unit). It was a mini-console that fitted in the joypad.



Dreamcast made online console gaming a reality. *Chu Chu Rocket!* was given away free to gamers.



Rockstar took the 2D PlayStation *Grand Theft Auto* and gave it a 3D look for the PS2 with *GTA III*.



One of the best PS2 games of all time? *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* sold one million copies in a day in the US.

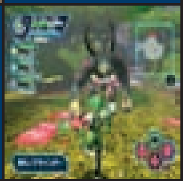
Pokémon Red and *Blue* were released for the Game Boy along with a cartoon series on Sky One. It was huge.



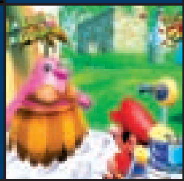
Namco joined forces with Sony to release an update. *Tekken Tag Tournament* had a cool bowling sub-game.



Eidos cashed in on the success of *Tomb Raider* with a movie starring Angelina Jolie. It wasn't great…



Nintendo went for miniaturisation with the GameCube – its first major console to use discs instead of cartridges.

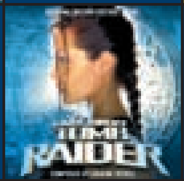




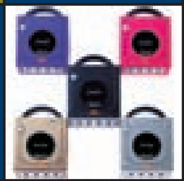
1999 Sega stole a lead from Sony in the 32-bit console race and Dreamcast was launched.



Sim games moved from the city into the home. *The Sims* from EA let you control people's everyday lives.

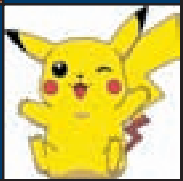


Phantasy Star Online allowed players to talk to each other in-game using the Dreamcast keyboard.



Shigeru Miyamoto did it again with *Super Mario Sunshine* on GameCube. A gaming masterpiece.

It was time for an update for Nintendo's classic black and white handheld – hello, Game Boy Color.



Sega's *Shenmue* on Dreamcast created a whole new genre, FREE (Full Reactive Eyes Entertainment). No, really…





SO THERE YOU HAVE IT. LEARN ANYTHING? PROBABLY NOT, IF WE KNOW OUR READERS – YOU'LL NO DOUBT HAVE MOST OF THESE GAMES IN YOUR EXTENSIVE COLLECTIONS (MAYBE NOT E.T., THOUGH). SO HERE'S TO THE NEXT HUNDRED YEARS OF GAMING JOY. I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING GAMES WITH PROBES IN MY BRAIN…

T·E·T·R·I·S B·A·T·T·L·E G·A·I·D·E·N

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THE FEW GAMERS WHO HAVE PLAYED IT DESCRIBE AS "THE BEST VERSION OF TETRIS EVER MADE". AND WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE GAME BOY TITLE EITHER…

Format: **Super Famicom**
Release: **1993**
Publisher: **Bullet Proof Software**
Developer: **Elorg**





▶ The spells in *Tetris Battle Gaiden* ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. This was one of the tamer efforts and when cast it ensured that your opponent could only see a tiny area of their screen via a small beam of light.

Ask most people to name the best version of *Tetris* they've played and 99.9 per cent will answer: "the Game Boy version". We'd concede that this is certainly one of the best incarnations of Alexey Pajitnov's amazingly addictive puzzle game, but we'd also argue a case for the little-known Super Famicom title, *Tetris Battle Gaiden* – a game which, to the best of our knowledge, never made it to the UK.

So, what's so special about it? Well, unlike many *Tetris* variants that have cropped up in the past, *Battle Gaiden* got all the ingredients just right – crucially the controls (which often feel a bit stiff in some versions) were spot on, making for a beautifully fluid gaming experience. But the game's real stroke of genius was the inclusion of eight different selectable characters ranging from a cartoon ninja to a bizarre shaman-type fellow. Each of these characters possessed a unique selection of spells, some of which were defensive, some aggressive.

However, before you could cast said spells (via a double tap of 'up' on the D-pad) you had to keep an eye out for the small orbs that appeared within certain pieces. When you completed a line with such an orb it flew into your magic gauge (a further three orbs could be stored in addition to this), giving you a range of four different spells to choose from. Granted, this may not sound revolutionary, but mastering the art of when to use your magic lent an already strategic game even more depth.



Furthermore, you had to be mindful of your opponent's spells and consider how you could counteract these with your own. For example, the princess could cast a sneaky level two spell which (temporarily) reflected back the effects of the next spell cast by an opponent. The pumpkin-like wizard character could summon bats that would steal the magic orbs in your foe's possession, while other characters were capable of performing strange, almost hallucinogenic strikes that would warp and invert the screen. Of course, traditional *Tetris* rules still applied here and if a player's tiles spilled above the top of the playing area then they lost the round.

Unless you've played it, it's very difficult to convey just how good *Tetris Battle Gaiden* was. Trust us, if you own a Super Famicom and ever chance upon a copy of the game then we really do recommend you buy it on sight, as it's a prime contender for the most overlooked and underrated game of all time.

SPELLING IT OUT…

What really made *Tetris Battle Gaiden* so great was undoubtedly the spellcasting system. While this could have taken away from the purity of classic *Tetris,* it instead served to enrich what was already a deeply strategic and satisfying experience. Knowing your own character's spells was just the half of it though. To enjoy continued victories it was also vital to understand what your opponent had up their sleeves. This meant learning in detail the strengths and weaknesses of each of the game's eight cartoon characters – know your enemy and all that jazz.

GREAT GAME BOSSES

CONTRA SPIRITS

So you've already fought your way past huge fire-spewing beasts and blown away more troops than were killed in the entirety of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*… what else could the celebrated Super Famicom title *Contra Spirits* (or *Super Probotector* on these shores) throw your way? The answer, put simply, is a whole lot more. After encountering, and eventually killing, the pair of skeletal mechanoids (who made the Terminator look like Doris Day on Prozac) that resided at the end of the third level, you'd think that the job had been done. Sorry sir, that ain't how it goes. After just a second to catch your breath, the wall behind you begins to open up… with two huge hands prising it apart. Oh yes, something bad is going to happen. For want of a better term, "Daddy's home".

When you see the huge skeletal boss pop his head onto the screen, you know that only hard times can lie ahead. Fortunately, our two heroes are quite athletic chaps and can scale the walls to avoid this behemoth's attacks – which is just as well, seeing as how he has a lethal repertoire of moves at his disposal (including one particularly nasty flame attack that follows you round the screen). In addition to dishing it out, this bony swine can take a bit of punishment too; in fact, he only gives up the ghost after you've blasted him with an extraordinary amount of ammo. With none of the bosses in the PS2's *Contra: Shattered Soldier* making the grade, we're looking forward to the upcoming *Neo Contra* redressing the balance a little.



▲ Good Lord, would you look at the size of that thing. It's a good job our hero seems to be wearing metal underpants, he must be bricking it…

M•A•G•I•C•A•L Q•U•E•S•T

Format: **Super Nintendo**
Release: **1992**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **In-House**

It's not very often that a gruelling fight with a tough boss can make us laugh out loud, but that's exactly what happens whenever we go up against Walrus Pete.

Mickey's Magical Quest **had already seen him fend off Mode 7 rotating spiders, massive multi-segmented snakes and Mach 1 flying eagles, but the best was yet to come. After negotiating various terrains, including gloomy forests and hazardous mountains, you eventually found yourself in Walrus Pete's icy domain. Using your trusty Fireman Suit it was then a simple case of navigating the straightforward level to reach Pete's personal ice rink. Beating Pete himself, however, was another matter entirely.**

Walrus Pete quickly took to the icy slopes and proceeded to flip and spin around in all his Mode 7 glory. He was no walkover and had many tricks up his sleeve to ensure that your courageous mouse got no further in his quest to find Pluto. Huge snowballs were Pete's main weapon of choice and he threw them with deadly accuracy. Fortunately, your hose was able to freeze the projectiles that could then be used against Pete himself.

After that it was simply a case of staying out of the big brute's way until you had managed to turn him into a popsicle. His erratic movement patterns may have meant that he was a tricky customer to defeat, but you can be sure that you'll have a smile on your face while you're attempting it.



Great RETRO Gaming Moments

▼ For a kiddy-looking game, Walrus Pete was a surprisingly hard boss to beat.





YOSHI'S ISLAND

NEVER MIND THAT PLUMBER, YOSHI NEEDS TO BE SALUTED AS THE HERO OF ONE OF THE GREATEST RETRO GAMES EVER



Format: SNES
Release: 1995
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-House

PRETTY IN PINK

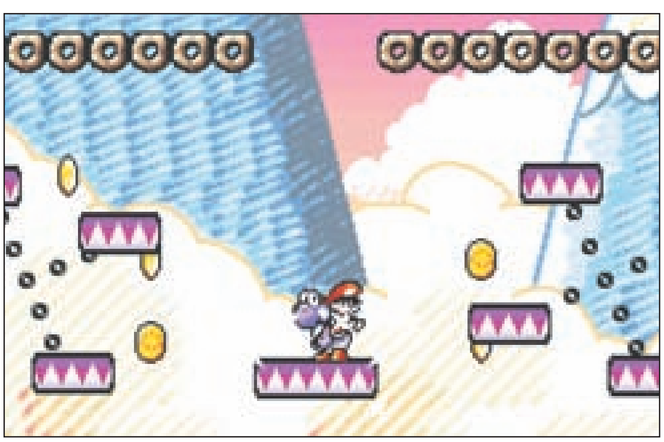
Like so many Japanese game boxes, *Yoshi's Island* featured the name of the game in Japanese and English, though it had somehow been mistranslated to *Yossy Island*. How Nintendo made such a mistake is confusing, especially seeing as Yoshi was already an established character. Dodgy spelling aside, this was one of the prettiest SNES boxes to date, with an art style reminiscent of the in-game graphics.



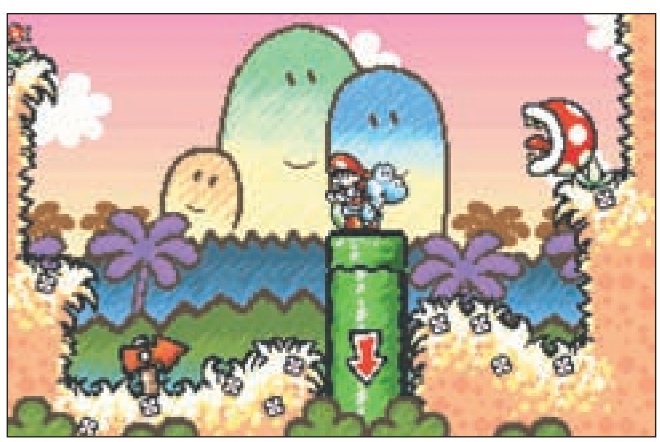
When Nintendo released *Super Mario World* in 1990, the game included a new face – a new face with a big smile and perhaps the longest tongue in the history of videogames. Of course, this was a time when Nintendo still had the Midas touch, and despite being somewhat stereotypical (if there's such a thing as a typically cutesy dinosaur), Yoshi was an instant hit.

Over the next few years, the little green guy made appearances in numerous Nintendo games, including *Yoshi's Cookie* and *Yoshi's Safari*, not to mention the SNES classic *Mario Kart*. But it wasn't until 1995 (by which time the SNES hardware was starting to look incredibly dated) that Yoshi finally got to star in a game that rivalled *Super Mario World* as the greatest platformer ever created. That game was *Yoshi's Island*.

The title's story was set prior to all the other Mario games, way back when Mario and Luigi were babies being delivered by the stork, in fact. In a suitably dramatic fashion, Mario was dropped by the stork when its journey was intercepted by an evil force, but his fall was broken by one of a group of Yoshis living on the once-tranquil Yoshi's Island. Luckily for Mario, the friendly Yoshis vowed to work together to deliver the helpless infant to his rightful home. And so began an adventure that saw Mario and his Yoshi friends



▲ You had to make sure that Baby Mario stayed on Yoshi's back or you'd lose a life. Very socially responsible.



▲ Some elements of the game were very similar to the *Mario World* titles, but there were plenty of new ideas too.



travelling through the most stylised scrolling platform levels ever developed.

Capturing the innocence of a child's drawing, *Yoshi's Island* boasted vivid, colourful environments featuring flowers, butterflies, caves, castles and ocean views. Nothing particularly special about that, you might think. But although the locations certainly weren't anything out of the ordinary for a platformer, it was the unique styling that made *Yoshi's Island* stand out from the crowd.

Much of the scenery was shaded with hatched lines that looked like they'd been roughly scribbled on with a wax crayon, while other areas used blotchy patterns, blended together as if they'd been dabbed on with a paintbrush. Then there were sections that were almost indistinguishable from the *Mario World* games, though most of these were enhanced by simple but effective scaling techniques such as 3D drawbridges that fell towards the screen or enemies with smooth 360-degree movement that used the SNES's sprite-rotation abilities.

Nintendo's artists had clearly crafted a masterpiece as far as *Yoshi's Island*'s visuals went, though their efforts had been aided by the inclusion of Argonaut's Super FX chip. This clever little piece of technology was used to process enough polygons to make *Star Wing* and *Stunt Race FX* possible, though in this case it was mostly used to expand the hardware's 2D capabilities.

Ordinarily, developers were only able to apply the SNES's Mode 7 scaling techniques to a single element – for example, the machine could rotate or enlarge one character or landscape at a time. But thanks to the Super FX chip, *Yoshi's Island* featured numerous characters rotating on-screen at once. Furthermore, simple polygonal elements scaled in and out of the screen to add a layer of depth.

With so many sumptuous special effects, it was pretty much guaranteed that *Yoshi's Island* would capture the industry's attention, but while the focus was very much on the visuals, the game included more than enough classic Nintendo gameplay and innovative ideas to keep the fans happy too. At its core, the structure of the game was much like *Super Mario World* (or any of Nintendo's other platformers, for that matter), but with a nip and tuck here and there, a couple of extra moves and a new way of gauging energy, *Yoshi's Island* felt as fresh as *Pong* had in 1972.

Perhaps the most obvious feature came in the form of Baby Mario, and how his safety was directly related to Yoshi's health – get hit and the little guy would be knocked from the saddle and end up floating around helplessly in a bubble while a timer gradually counted down to zero. If you managed to grab him during the countdown all would return to normal and the timer would slowly build back up to ten seconds (a maximum of 30 seconds could be achieved by collecting Stars). However, if you failed to reach Mario during the time limit he'd be whisked away by a team of nasties and you'd lose a life.

Unfortunately, by the time *Yoshi's Island* was released in 1995 much of the casual gaming community had lost interest in the ageing SNES. In fact, it wasn't uncommon to see the game in bargain bins for under a tenner just months after its UK release, much to the horror of Nintendo's hardcore fans. But those who did pick up a copy at such a reasonable price found themselves enjoying an unforgettable title that will probably remain with them for the rest of their gaming lives.

SO MUCH FOR THE SEQUEL

N64 owners may recall the release of *Yoshi's Story*, the pseudo follow-up to *Yoshi's Island*. Using a method of grabbing renders in sprite form (similar to the technique used with *Donkey Kong Country* on the SNES) the graphics were certainly very eye-catching if a little out-of-date. Unfortunately, the gameplay simply didn't live up to the quality of its predecessor, much to the dismay of the fans. It wasn't that there was anything particularly wrong with it, but the level structure wasn't as sophisticated and getting to the final boss was considerably easier.

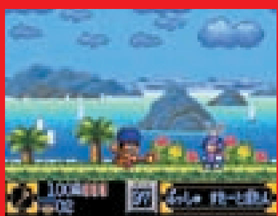
Presentation: This is Nintendo at its best	**96%**
Graphics Lush colours and a great cartoon style	**98%**
Sound Tuneful melodies and cutesy sound effects	**94%**
Gameplay Classic platform gameplay with the odd novel twist	**98%**
Lifespan This is huge. And it's got plenty of secrets to find	**97%**
OVERALL	**97%**

16-BIT GRAPHICAL EFFECTS

The 16-bit era saw some rudimentary 3D action, mostly on the SNES thanks to its revolutionary chipset

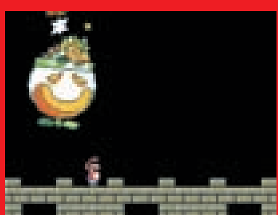
PARALLAX SCROLLING

Parallax scrolling involved separating 2D backgrounds into two or more layers so the scenery could be scrolled at different speeds to create a greater impression of depth.



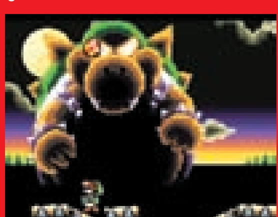
SPRITE ROTATION

By using this technique, developers could smoothly rotate characters through 360 degrees without drawing separate frames of animation, which saved a huge amount of memory.



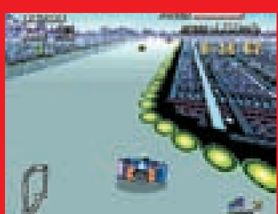
SPRITE ENLARGEMENT/ REDUCTION

Sprite enlargement and reduction saved memory space by allowing the developers to draw a single object and increase or decrease its size. A gimmick that was often over-used.



MODE 7 LANDSCAPING

Mode 7 was a method of processing 2D images on a 3D grid. Titles such as *F-Zero* and *Super Mario Kart* looked great even though the vehicles were merely 2D sprites.



A Great RETRO Gaming Moment





▲ The rotating tunnel was a bit clunky, but still awesome for its time.

S·U·P·E·R C·A·S·T·L·E·V·A·N·I·A IV

When gamers received the fourth instalment of the *Castlevania* franchise in 1991, many were initially disappointed. After the atmospheric menu screens the game itself was rather garish and sported some of the worst sprite animation on the SNES. However, this was *Castlevania* and no matter how hilarious Simon Belmont looked as he moonwalked up stairs, the game demanded to be played to within an inch of its life.

Spurred on by a majestic orchestral score, later levels saw improvements to the game's visuals and some of the most imaginative use of Mode 7 yet seen on the console. The magic began as Belmont entered an empty room… Finding no available exit and wary of the spikes protruding from the walls, it seemed inevitable that our intrepid hero would have to retreat. Suddenly and without warning the whole room started to rotate. Quickly ensnaring a convenient grapple point with his whip, Belmont swung crazily like a pendulum. The room eventually came to a halt leaving just enough time to whip a few Medusa heads (like you do) before rotating one final time.

The next stage consisted of a cylindrical tunnel that spun round as Belmont fought through it. Okay, so there may have been slowdown but it didn't matter, the effect looked simply amazing and was a great showpiece for the SNES.

Even monsters received a healthy dose of Mode 7 magic, with the Rock Golem being the most memorable example. The more Simon hit it the smaller it got – its eventual demise saw the critter fill the screen then rapidly diminish into oblivion. The stand-out moment, however, was your perilous journey across the top of the massive chandeliers. From the second you first set eyes on the moving lights to the moment you were safely back on firm ground, the effect was superb. *Super Castlevania IV*'s reputation was intact and, along with *Symphony Of The Night*, still represents the best the series has offered budding vampire hunters.



▲ Swashbuckling, light-fitting-leaping at its best.





GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT… GAMES TH

STARFOX 2 [SNES]

GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT… GAMES T





Some games come out in Japan but never get translated to English, while others are released in arcades, but never get converted to home consoles. And others, like Nintendo's Starfox 2, never even make it out of production…

Format: **SNES**
Release date: **1995 (Cancelled)**
Publisher: **N/A**
Developer: **Nintendo**

During the difficult transition from 2D to 3D during the mid-Nineties, Nintendo found itself in an awkward situation. The company was having trouble finishing its N64 hardware and its competitors already had powerful consoles on the market that had mastered 3D visuals. With its new console still some way off, Nintendo had no choice but to continue supporting the 16-bit SNES, which was starting to show its age. However, thanks to British company Argonaut, the system had been given a boost in the form of the Super FX chip. This inexpensive component could easily be fitted into regular SNES cartridges and enabled developers to manipulate simple polygonal environments. Used in *Starfox* (*Starwing*), *Stunt Race FX* and *Yoshi's Island*, it was obvious just how much difference the chip could make to SNES software, and with *Starfox* being so popular it wasn't surprising that Nintendo decided to produce a sequel.

In 1995, *Starfox 2* was in the final stages of bug testing; promotional material had gone out and, aside from a few glitches, the code was complete. It was a shock, then, when the game was abruptly cancelled, apparently due to the fact that directors at Nintendo had requested that the team working on it began development of an N64 version of *Starfox* immediately.

Strangely, *Starfox 64* (*Lylat Wars*) was very similar to the original game with none of the enhancements that had been made to the abandoned SNES sequel. There were two new characters named Miyu and Faye in *Starfox 2*, for example, and rather than have the whole *Starfox* team working together, you had to choose a single wingman from the six on offer before the start of each mission.

While this doesn't look like changing for the GameCube update, we're promised co-operative play for up to four players, meaning we may be able to take most of the squad out at once after all.

▲ Look – it's practically finished, so why on earth weren't we allowed to get our hands on *Starfox 2*?

GREAT GAME BOSSES

BOB THE FISH - EARTHWORM JIM 2

When the first game in the series had pitted our invertebrate hero against such unlikely felons as a bounty-hunting crow, a heap of rubbish and an evil cat named Evil, we weren't expecting anything close to sanity from the sequel.

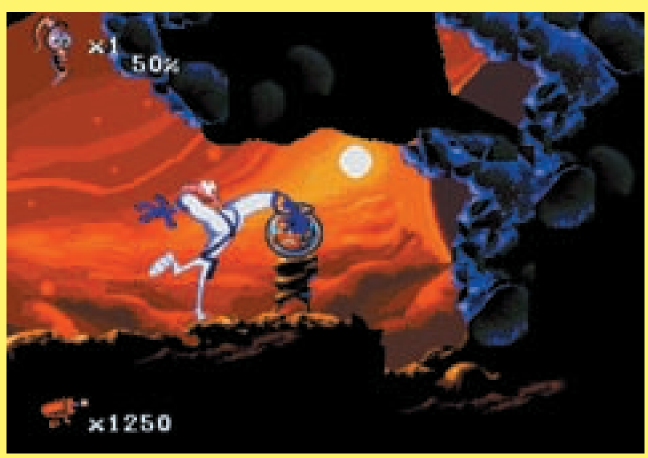
Suffice to say, *Earthworm Jim 2* exceeded all our expectations, confronting the player with a boss battle so absolutely farcical that no arch-enemy has since come close. One of the tougher bosses in the first game, Bob the Fish, returns at the end of the first level to continue his wave of finned tyranny, but this time around let's just say Bob isn't such a threat…



Equipped with his trademark Power Suit, Jim negotiates the usual menagerie of beasties – as well as a horde of stairlift-bound old ladies and Bob's many guardians – to reach the end of the opening stage only to find his scaly foe lying in wait, literally a fish out of water. Well, almost.

Protected by a mere glass sphere and several litres of water, the gilled villain doesn't stand a chance against our annelid hero. No fancy button combos or tricky patterns here – after the huge 'Fight!' prompt, Jim simply sidles up to the fishbowl and plunges his hand into the liquid, snagging the wicked fish and swiftly swallows him whole.

Simple? Yes. Anticlimactic? Perhaps. But in terms of surreal ingenuity, very little comes close to this mismatch of the century.



▲ Do worms eat fish? Hell, they do now. And they do it with *such* style.

Classic Machine



Japan: October 1988, ¥21,000
US: Limited Release in LA and New York, August 1989
US: General Release, September 1989, $190
UK: November 1990, £189.99

MEGA DRIVE



THE BEGINNING

Up until the release of the Sega Mega Drive (Sega Genesis in the US), Nintendo and its NES console had a vice-like grip on the home console and videogame market. Having failed to make any major impact with its superior 8-bit Master System, Sega decided go for the jugular by releasing a substantially more powerful console, the Mega Drive. The 16-bit console only sold moderately well in its native Japan, but in the US and European markets the machine went down a storm; thanks in no small part to some great coin-op conversions and polished sports sims.

It's arguable that the Mega Drive effectively forced Nintendo into bringing forward its successor to the Famicom/NES, as without any competition the house of Mario could have sat back and let the money roll in from its still-popular 8-bit system. If nothing else, the Mega Drive showed that Nintendo was not untouchable and its release effectively heralded the beginning of the console wars that are still raging today.

THE END

As is so often the case with firms that have enjoyed rapid success in a market, Sega began to lose its direction. As the popularity of 16-bit systems began to decline, the erstwhile console manufacturer released a number of ill-judged hardware add-ons for the Mega Drive, including the white elephants that were the Mega CD and the 32X. Both were expensive, lacked any decent software and ultimately went on to sully Sega's reputation in the eyes of gamers.

Nintendo, by contrast, handled things with much more savvy. Its Super Famicom/SNES was also suffering, but rather than go down the hardware add-on road the firm scrapped its planned CD peripheral (this would come back to haunt Nintendo, but that's another story) and instead bolstered the quality of its games by incorporating internal chips such as the Super FX into cartridges. Sadly, Sega would never recapture the position it had held during the Mega Drive era and, despite being loved by the hard-core gaming community, both the Saturn and Dreamcast were commercial failures.



THE JOYPAD

When the Mega Drive launched in Japan in 1988, the need for more than three action buttons on the face of a joypad wouldn't have been a priority (remember, *Street Fighter II* didn't arrive until 1991). To be fair, the Mega Drive's controller was actually quite good – the ergonomic design was significantly superior to that of, say, the NES or PC Engine, although it lacked the innovation and flair that Nintendo's effort on the Super Famicom would later display. Sadly, as the popularity of one-on-

PERIPHERALS AND ADD-ONS

Few console manufacturers have been able to resist releasing extravagant and often wildly misguided extra bits and pieces for their machines. Sega was no exception and launched some rather ill-judged peripherals for the Mega Drive.

The Menacer lightgun peripheral was badly designed and lacked any decent compatible software (although, to be fair, it was better than Nintendo's dire Super Scope). More serious however, was the release of the Mega CD. This 'wonderful' piece of kit initially sold for several hundred pounds. In real terms it offered players little more than grainy FMV sequences and slightly improved music. Few developers utilised the extra graphical capabilities that the Mega CD afforded them (not that they were that great anyway). Core's *Thunderhawk* was one of the better titles, but that's about it.

Adding insult to injury was the 32X – a badly-thought-out stopgap that improved the capabilities of the MegaDrive while we waited for the Saturn. Again, software support was thin on the ground and the only thing the device did successfully was to further sully Sega's already tainted reputation. Oh dear.

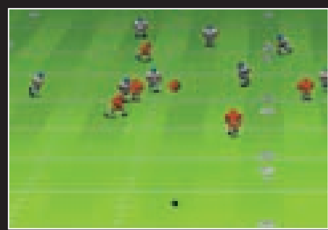


one beat-'em-ups flourished, the three-button set-up became increasingly unacceptable. Consequently, Sega released a six-button pad (complete with a strange "mode button"), but it was too late in the day and many gamers had switched to Nintendo's 16-bit console.

KEY GAMES

The Mega Drive played host to a broad range of software that covered pretty much all the key genres. We single out a number of the major titles that helped the machine win its way into the hearts of gamers.

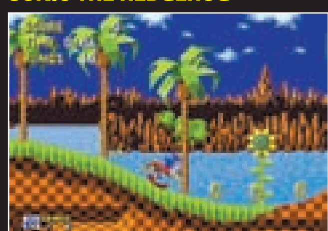
JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL



Our American cousins love their sport. Thus, it stands to reason that they also like videogame simulations of sport. This fact was not lost on Sega and EA. If one game sold the Genesis to the all-important US market then it had to be *John Madden Football*. EA's game was, put simply, light-years ahead of any similar title on a rival home system (*10-Yard Fight* on the NES, anyone?).

With great visuals, a well-thought-out control interface and a huge library of plays, *John Madden Football* went down very well in both the US and Europe. It's a testament to the original game's quality that the series is still running today. Ironically, where EA had helped the MegaDrive grow in the US, the firm had a hand in the Dreamcast's demise by choosing not to develop for Sega's 128-bit machine.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



The one thing Sega (and, by definition, the Mega Drive) lacked was a memorable mascot to rival Nintendo's ubiquitous Mario – sorry, but Alex Kidd just wasn't up to the job. Consequently, in 1991 a blue hedgehog named Sonic blasted his way onto our screens and became the firm's figurehead (he probably handled the marketing campaign for Dreamcast as well…).

As it happened, *Sonic The Hedgehog* was inferior to Nintendo's *Super Mario World*, lacking the depth of the plumber-centric masterpiece (Sega fanboys, please don't write in about this – it's just our opinion and we're sticking by it). However, the game's fast, flashy visuals managed to win over a significant number of players and the much anticipated sequel, *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*, went on to become the biggest-selling Mega Drive game in the machine's history.

GOLDEN AXE



Despite what the press said at the time, *Golden Axe* on the Mega Drive was not "arcade perfect" by a long chalk. Unlike the coin-op, the corpses of defeated foes did not petrify and stay on-screen. Furthermore, the end sequence of the original (where the virtual arcade blew up and the characters escaped) was also missing. These were just a few of the many deficits in the consumer version. That said, to the untrained eye the conversion did look pretty good and MD *Golden Axe* was of a sufficiently high quality to convince players that the Mega Drive was superior to the NES. Decent ports of *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* and *Strider* further boosted the machine's status, although again, neither were perfect translations.

But is it art?

Now before we start, let's make it clear that bad artwork for western releases was by no means a problem exclusive to the Mega Drive (just think of the image on the PAL version of *Street Fighter II* for the Super Nintendo). However, the dire imagery that adorned the covers of UK Mega Drive games was especially offensive. A case in point was *Strider*. The Japanese version featured a lovely stylish image, whereas its western counterpart centred on a guy who looked not dissimilar to William Shatner. And as for that black grid design… please.

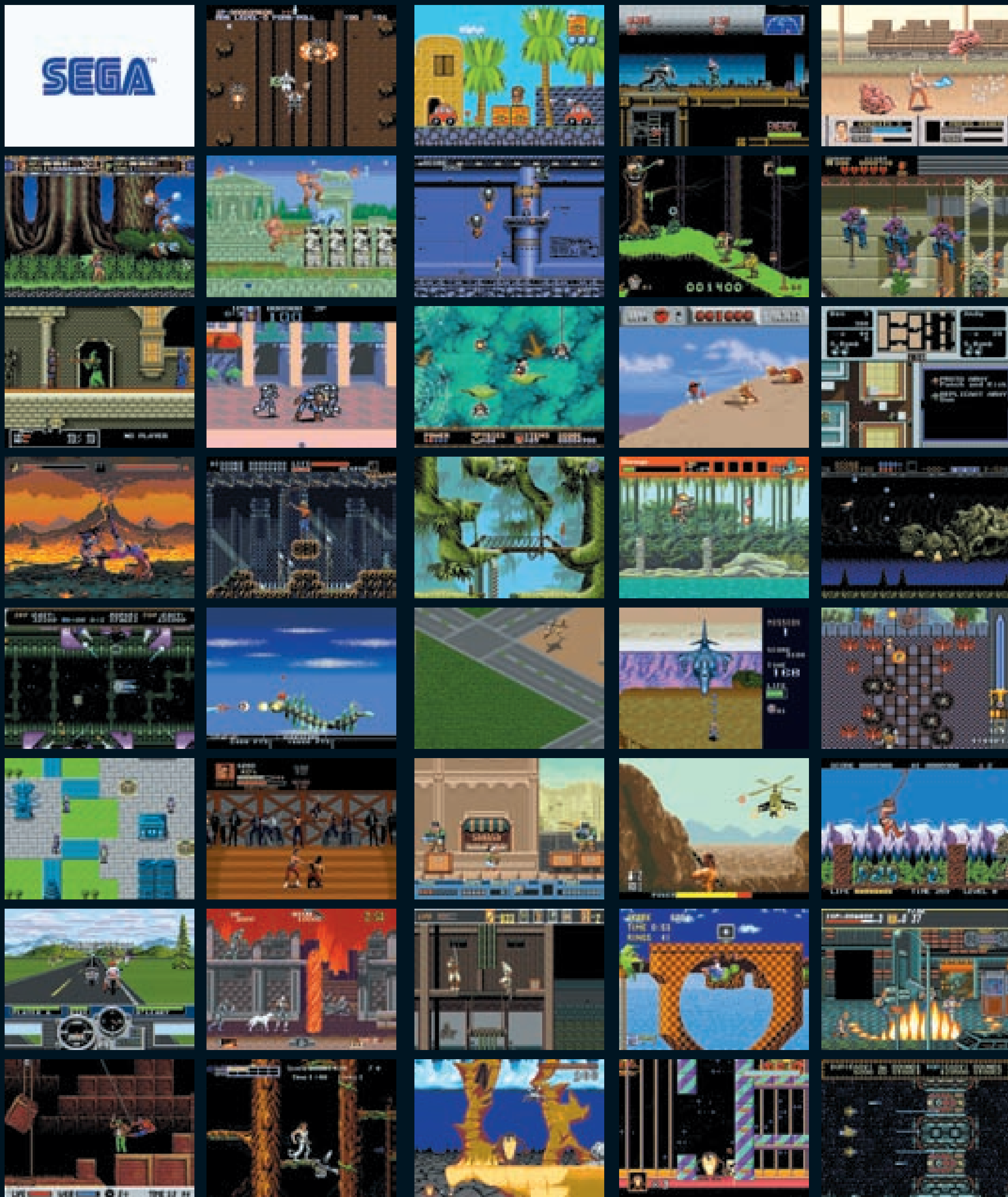


▲ Look at the lovely Japanese artwork, it's rather easy on the eye, isn't it?



▲ Now examine this 'delightful' little image. Surely it would look good hanging above the fireplace, non?

MEGA DRIVE [GEN]



Classic Machine





▼ The lush background art was out of this world (quite literally) but it was Conrad B Hart who stole the show with his rotoscoping.

F·L·A·S·H·B·A·C·K

T·H·E Q·U·E·S·T F·O·R I·D·E·N·T·I·T·Y

IT'S LIKE PRINCE OF PERSIA, BUT WITH ALIENS – WHAT MORE COULD YOU POSSIBLY WANT FROM A GAME, EH?

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

Everyone remembers the first time they were really blown away by a game's outstanding graphics. While it might not have been the very first time for us, one of the instances that stands out most in our mind was when Delphine released *Flashback* for the Amiga. Despite being a psuedo-sequel to *Another World* – a screen-by-screen adventure game that set a new standard in rotoscoped animation – *Flashback*'s style was clearly influenced more by the earlier *Prince Of Persia*. In fact, replace the alien setting with a Persian palace and the Morphs (alien invaders with the ability to imitate humans) with turban-wearing guards and it could have been the same game…

As was the case with some of Delphine's other products – *Another World* and *Cruise For A Corpse* immediately spring to mind – *Flashback* had a very simple yet compelling storyline. Although you control Conrad B Hart, you don't actually know this at the start of the game – mainly because having uncovered a conspiracy to take over the Earth, you've had your memory wiped and have been dumped in the middle of an alien jungle (hey, it happens to the best of us).

It's here where you begin the adventure to recover your mind from the Morphs, reach the alien homeworld and prevent their plans from coming to fruition – and while this is nowhere near as hard as *Another World*, it's still a tough (but immensely enjoyable) adventure.

Format(s): **Amiga (first), PC, Mac, SNES, Mega Drive, 3D0, CD-i, Sega MegaCD, Jaguar**
Release date: **1992**
Publisher: **US Gold/ Mindscape**
Developer: **Delphine**

While the game was highly polished in terms of background art and presentation, these weren't the things that made a lot of people's jaws hit the floor. Instead, it was the animation – using a system that Delphine had branded Cinematique (and had used for a handful of its titles prior to *Flashback*), the star of the game was most certainly Conrad himself, moving in a more lifelike way than any game character had ever done before. Thanks to Conrad having the ability to do everything the Prince could do and more besides – including forward rolls to pass through narrow areas and huge running jumps to access far-off ledges – *Flashback* far surpassed *Prince Of Persia* with regard to the realism of its lead character.

But *Flashback* didn't just boast great visuals. Thankfully, the gameplay matched the standard of the graphics by offering challenging level design, some annoyingly head-scratching puzzles (which often included working out how to take out certain enemies and move on without getting annihilated yourself) and more than a few well-presented, yet not too complicated, cut-scenes to keep the story moving along. It was proof that while presentation was important, a game didn't have to be bogged down with complicated controls and overly important plot threads to be compelling – an art that appears to have been lost somewhat in the mire of today's industry.

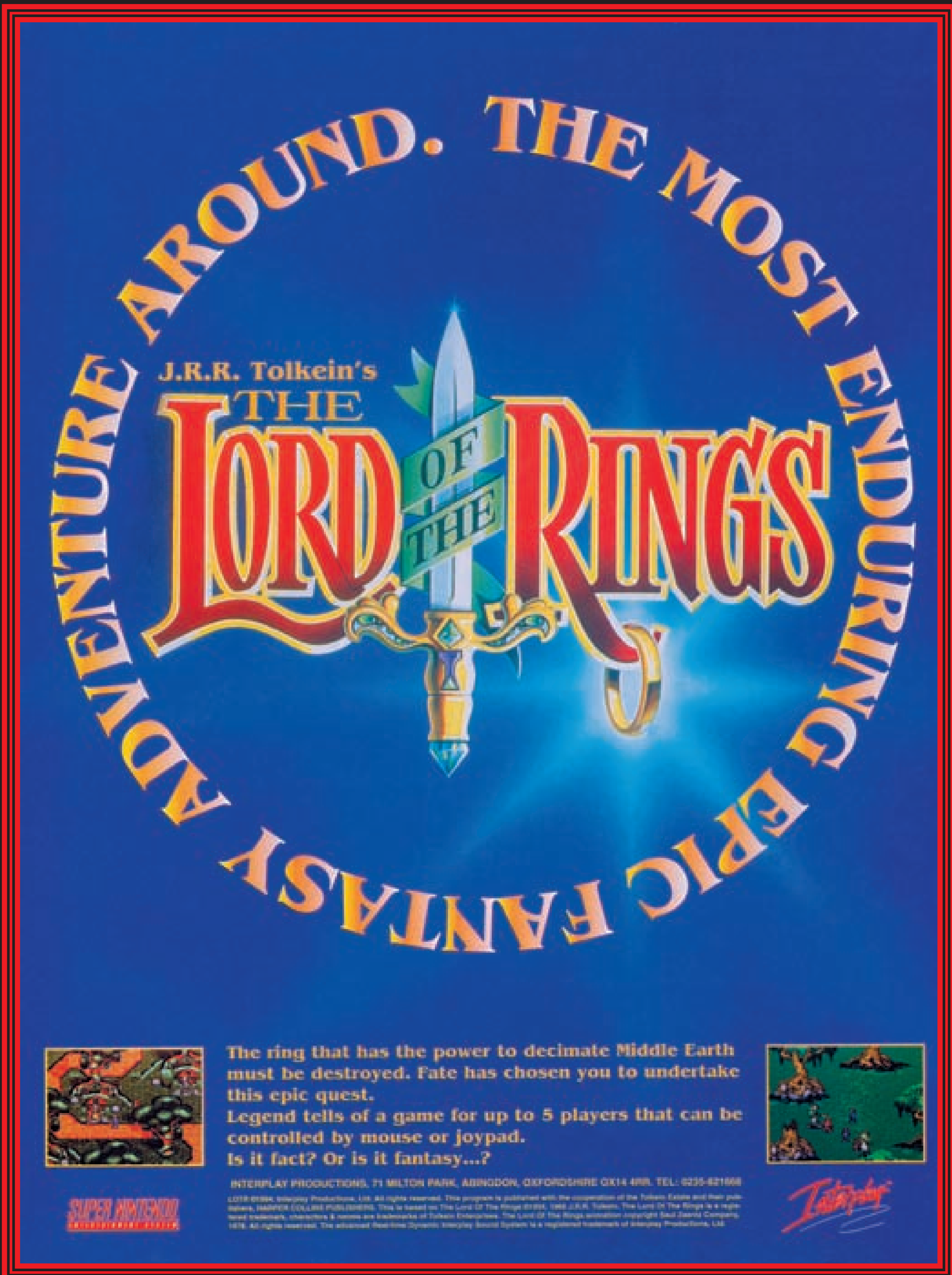
If only the rumours of a *Flashback* remake for the GBA were true.



▲ Remind you of anyone? Conrad's movement was very like the Prince of Persia's.

BEFORE & AFTER

Flashback **is the second game in a trilogy and the most accomplished of the three titles. But there's no doubt that** ***Another World*** **(the game that, with** ***Prince Of Persia*****, brought rotoscoping to the fore of games animation) was a decent experience – even if it did feature numerous** ***Dragon's Lair*****-style 'do this or die' segments and was too short and stupidly hard. Sadly, the same can't be said for the third game,** ***Fade To Black*****. Although the move into 3D was to be expected, it made the game less playable and left fans disappointed.**



J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S THE LORD OF THE RINGS (SNES) Interplay, 1994 – UK Advertisement



Burning up his fuel, up here alone **Rocket Knight Adventures – Mega Drive [Konami] 1993**



S·O·N·I·C T·H·E H·E·D·G·E·H·O·G 2

Great RETRO Gaming Moments

Completing the frustratingly difficult special stages in *Sonic The Hedgehog* was the only way to collect all seven Chaos Emeralds and unlock the better ending. Great for completists and arguably the only true way to finish the game, yet it still seemed like scant reward for so much work. You could almost hear the collective groan of gamers everywhere as they hit the goal icon during the special stages by mistake and found themselves unceremoniously booted back to the game proper, postponing their quest for the perfect ending until they found another 50 Rings.

The Chaos Emeralds made a return in the sequel but, fortunately, the special stages were made easier for Sonic's second outing. Sonic and Tails would have to run along a half-pipe and collect a set number of Rings while avoiding bombs to get their hands on a Chaos Emerald. Yet again, it was the only way to see the proper ending but there was another surprise in store for those who collected all seven Emeralds…

This time, collecting 50 Rings after obtaining all the Chaos Emeralds allowed you to turn into Super Sonic. Jump into the air and the spiky blue hedgehog would turn into his invincible, flashing yellow alter ego that could run and jump at twice Sonic's normal speed – although, to be precise, Super Sonic didn't run, instead preferring to glide along and destroy any Badniks in his path.

The number of Rings would become a timer, counting down to zero and returning Sonic back to his blue, vulnerable self once they had run out. But those few moments were enough to ensure Sonic players were checking every nook and cranny of each level to find as many Rings as possible, just for those precious extra seconds as Super Sonic.

As news spread of the existence of Super Sonic, Chaos Emeralds went from a minor bonus to a genuine reason for persevering with the special stages. Gamers wanted to see Super Sonic for themselves and would often return to the game once they had beaten it, not for the proper ending but to experience Super Sonic first-hand. And what euphoria once they finally got to see the yellow hedgehog in action – yet another great retro gaming moment for those who did.



Format: **Mega Drive**
Release Date: **1992**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Sega**



GREAT GAME BOSSES

REVENGE OF SHINOBI

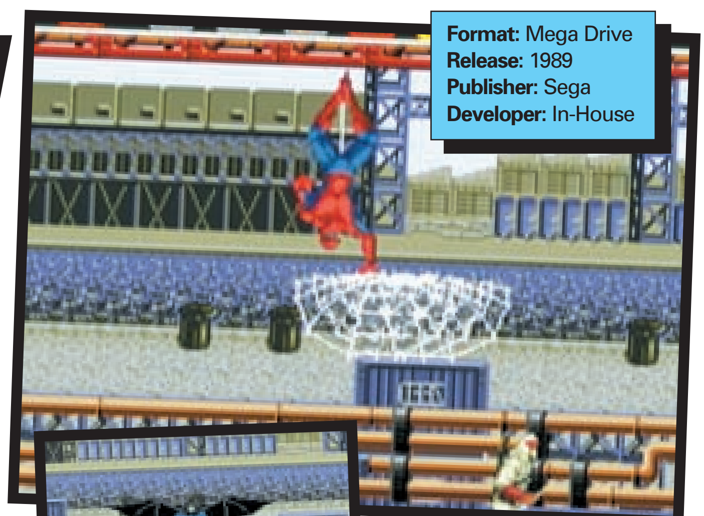
When Sega's *Shinobi* sequel appeared, defeating superheroes was one of the last tasks that gamers expected to undertake. But once you'd made it to the end of level six, you'd face off against Marvel's amazing Spider-Man – boy, was he a pig to beat.

Crawling around at the top of the screen, the webbed wonder would fire three sticky nets towards your intrepid Ninja. While you were struggling to break free, Spidey would drop down and rob you of your much-needed energy. Hit him enough times (or better yet, use some potent Ninja magic) and the wall crawler would eventually concede defeat and disappear – and that's where things got interesting…

If you were lucky enough to have an early copy of the game, your next opponent would be none other than the Dark Knight himself, Batman. Apart from a devastating move that saw him rapidly fly from one side of the screen to the other, Bats was pretty easy to defeat. As Sega had failed to get the licensing rights for the Caped Crusader, in later games he was replaced by a nondescript winged demon, which, while identical in moves, was a major letdown after Spidey's dramatic entrance.

So, how do you know if you have the rarer first version (and yes, we know about Godzilla being replaced on level seven)? You'll just have to play the game and find out.

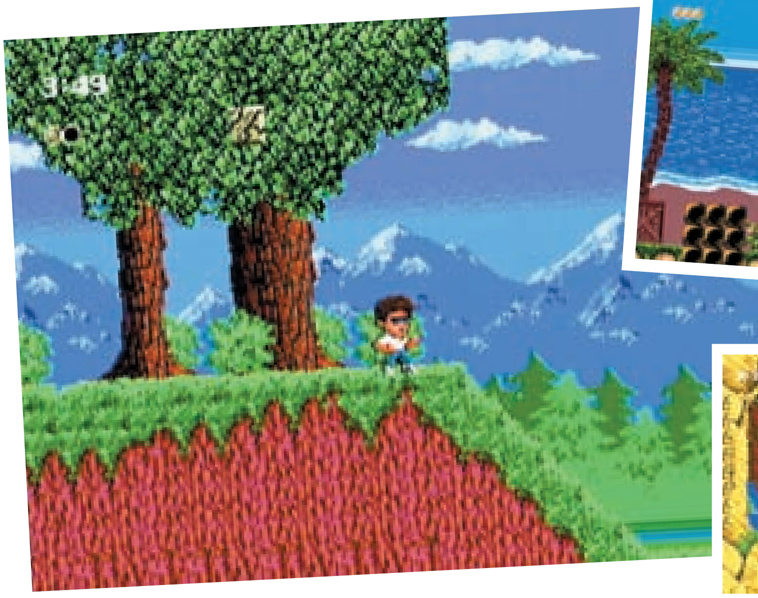
Format: Mega Drive
Release: 1989
Publisher: Sega
Developer: In-House

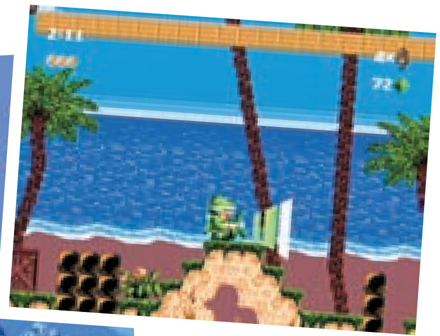


▲ That Web Fluid gets everywhere, so batter Spidey with a rolled-up newspaper to prevent accidents.

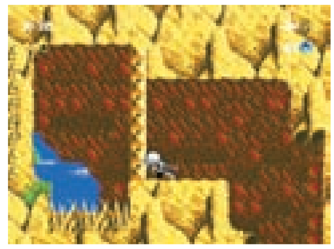


◀ Holy licence infringement! Batman? Yes, but for a limited time only thanks to copyright laws.





▲ The many faces of the kid they call Chameleon. Who are 'they'? Dunno…



GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT…

KID CHAMELEON

Looking at the Mega Drive back catalogue, it's easy to forget just how many great games there were. Aside from all the *Sonic*s, *FIFA*s and *PGA Golf*s, the system was home to beautifully crafted adventure games like *Quackshot: Starring Donald Duck*, and *Castle Of Illusion: Starring Mickey Mouse*. Of course, many people remember these titles once prompted, though few are likely to recall *Kid Chameleon*.

Developed by Sega, this atmospheric platform adventure told the tale of a mysterious amusement machine that imprisoned anyone who played it. Entitled *Wild Side*, this fantasy arcade game was said to use holograms to create an alternative reality, though the limited power of the Mega Drive meant that such imagery could only be represented by a simple *Matrix*-like grid that replaced the scenery at the end of each level.

Of course, every adventure game needs a hero and the central character with the difficult task of destroying the big boss, known only as Heady Metal, was Kid Chameleon. Wearing blue jeans, a white T-shirt and a pair of shades, he was certainly one cool dude… well, cool in an Eighties kind of way.

Once into the first level, however, he didn't look like an Eighties throwback for all that long, as different headgear would soon morph him into a more effective fighting machine, hence the name Kid Chameleon. These included an iron mask for climbing walls, a spiked helmet for crashing through walls, and a Samurai headdress, complete with sword. Diamonds could also be collected to power special moves, from invincibility through to more unusual ideas, such as the ability to slow down all on-screen enemies.

Aside from these unique touches though, much of the rest of the game was a generic platform affair that involved jumping over gaps and stomping on enemies' heads. It even included all the regular locations – the first area was reminiscent of Green Hill Zone from *Sonic*, while later levels featured caves, lava and a beach. On top of that it didn't even look that special; sprites were generally rather small, and the predictable scenery had a tendency to appear rough and grainy. Despite its shortcomings, *Kid Chameleon* had a strangely unsettling atmosphere which made the game seem quite unlike anything else. It was also huge, spanning more than 70 levels, so there was certainly plenty to keep you going. Best of all, you can pick it up for less than a fiver these days. Which is always nice.

Presentation	75%
Graphics	78%
Playability	85%
Longevity	92%
OVERALL	85%

▼ Though it looks like there's a coal scuttle on your head, you are now blessed with special abilities.



Hat Tricks

Here's Kid Chameleon's complete list of hats and headdresses



Type: Iron Knight – a flat-topped helmet
Special Power: Allows you to climb walls
Diamond Power 1: Circle Of Doom (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 2: Extra Hit Point (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Red Stealth – a samurai helmet
Special Power: Arms you with a sword
Diamond Power 1: Samurai Haze (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 2: Death Snake (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Berzerker – a metal helmet with spikes on the top
Special Power: Allows you to smash through certain walls
Diamond Power 1: Invulnerability (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 2: Wall Of Death (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Maniaxe – a hockey mask
Special Power: Allows you to throw axes
Diamond Power 1: Circle Of Death (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 2: Extra Life (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Juggernaut – a samurai helmet with a skull mask
Special Power: Arms you with a tank that fires skulls
Diamond Power: Five-Way Shot (requires five diamonds)

Type: Micromax – a fly mask
Special Power: Lets you stick to walls
Diamond Power 1: Mini-Snake (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 2: Swift Mini Snake (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Eyeclops – a green visored helmet
Special Power: Reveals hidden blocks
Diamond Power 1: Fatal Beam (requires two diamonds)

Type: Skycutter – a skateboard helmet
Special Power: Lets you fly upside down
Diamond Power 1: Invulnerability (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 2: Death Snake (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Cyclone – a helmet with wings
Special Power: Allows you to fly
Diamond Power 1: Slashing Rain (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 2: Tracking Rain (requires 50 diamonds)

> **"I want to make interesting games. I want to create something that will make the player happy. I want the player to be surprised and have fun"**
>
> YUJI NAKA, CREATOR OF *SONIC THE HEDGEHOG*

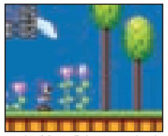
MASTER SYSTEM

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



■ 1991
■ Master System
■ The success of the Mega Drive version meant that a Master System game had to be released. Though stripped down for the 8-bit system, notable additions included hidden Chaos Emeralds and special stages to make this a must-have game.

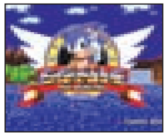
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



■ 1992
■ Master System
■ The 8-bit system was still too popular for Sega to ignore so it got its own *Sonic 2*. Okay, so it was nowhere near as technically proficient as the Mega Drive game but it greatly improved upon the original, which was just what was needed.

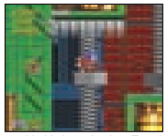
MEGA DRIVE

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



■ 1991
■ Mega Drive
■ *Sonic The Hedgehog's* mixture of speed and graphical finesse helped establish the Mega Drive as a serious contender for the hearts of gamers. A winning formula had been created and Sega finally had a recognisable mascot.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



■ 1992
■ Mega Drive
■ With this sequel, Hog-loving gamers got a game that had been improved in every way. It was also the first console game to have a worldwide launch when Tuesday 24 November, 1992 became known as 'Sonic 2's Day'. Geddit? Oh dear…

SONIC CD



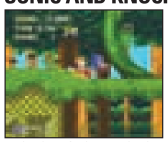
■ 1993
■ Sega CD
■ New hardware (well, an add-on) needed *Sonic* to try to sell it to the masses. Basically, this was *Sonic 2* with a time travel element (i.e. different backgrounds) but it did try to make use of the CD-Rom with much-improved animation and sound.

SONIC SPINBALL



■ 1993
■ Mega Drive
■ *Sonic Pinball* was an attempt to cash in even more on the blue speedy one. Once again, deviating from what gamers expected (pinball, anyone?) proved its undoing and the fact that this was a deeply average game didn't help matters.

SONIC AND KNUCKLES



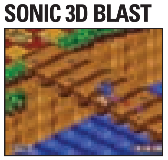
■ 1994
■ Mega Drive
■ Picking up where *Sonic 3* left off, this is essentially more of the same great gameplay. However, thanks to the use of Sega's lock-on technology, further gaming bonuses could be attained by simply connecting the cart to other Sonic games.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3



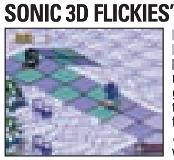
■ 1994
■ Mega Drive
■ A return to form for Sonic with this very impressive outing that not only looked beautiful but also added a greater depth of gameplay. Of special note is that this is the first *Sonic* game to have a save feature, thanks to the built-in battery.

SONIC 3D BLAST



■ 1996
■ Sega Saturn
■ New console, new *Sonic* game. Well, kind of… This was pretty much the same as the Mega Drive title but with added 3D tunnels. However, at the time it impressed gamers and gave them an indication of what the Saturn was capable of.

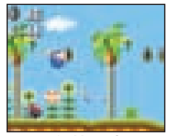
SONIC 3D FLICKIES' ISLAND



■ 1996
■ Mega Drive
■ The Mega Drive might have been getting on a bit but that didn't stop Sega from giving it one last *Sonic* adventure. This was standard Sonic fare viewed from an isometric perspective and it was the perfect swan song for the much-loved console.

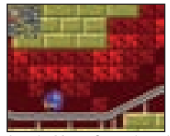
HANDHELD

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



■ 1991
■ Game Gear
■ The battery-eating baby brother to the Mega Drive and Master System was also home to a *Sonic* title. Essentially, it was exactly the same as the Master System version with a few very minor tweaks to compensate for the small screen.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



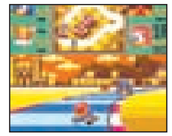
■ 1992
■ Game Gear
■ Once again, the popularity of *Sonic* was employed to try to bolster sales of the flagging Game Gear. Again, this version would take its cue from the Master System but a dodgy camera angle ensured much frustration.

SONIC CHAOS



■ 1993
■ Game Gear
■ Handheld gamers rejoiced at Sonic's return to the Game Gear. This time you could play through the game as Tails (curiously, he'd been absent from previous Game Gear outings) and this version showed what Sega's handheld could do.

SONIC DRIFT



■ 1993
■ Game Gear
■ What Game Gear fans needed was a *Mario Kart* game, or so Sega decided. A *Mario Kart*-style racer would have been ideal, but what Japanese gamers got was a slow and uninspired racer that was never released elsewhere, thankfully.

SONIC SPINBALL



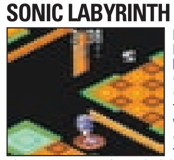
■ 1993
■ Game Gear
■ If the Mega Drive gamers had to suffer it, then the handheld gamers had to as well. At no point did Sega consider the fact that the udders might have well and truly dried up as this ineffectual and ill-conceived game showed.

SONIC TRIPLE TROUBLE



■ 1994
■ Game Gear
■ After a glut of badly thought-out Game Gear titles, the ickle Sonic was back on form and doing what he and Tails did best – collecting Rings, Emeralds and racing through bonus stages. As Game Gear outings go, this was mightily impressive.

SONIC LABYRINTH



■ 1995
■ Game Gear
■ This time Sega decided that a puzzle game not dissimilar to *Marble Madness* was the order of the day. However, the time limits and puzzle elements converged to make bring down what might have been a half-decent game.

SONIC DRIFT 2



■ 1995
■ Game Gear
■ Compared to the original, *Sonic Drift 2* was a much more considered game. This time it delivered a better Grand Prix mode, banked curves, hills and the all-important link-up mode. Not as classy as *Mario Kart*, but still a worthy attempt.

ARCADE

SEGASONIC



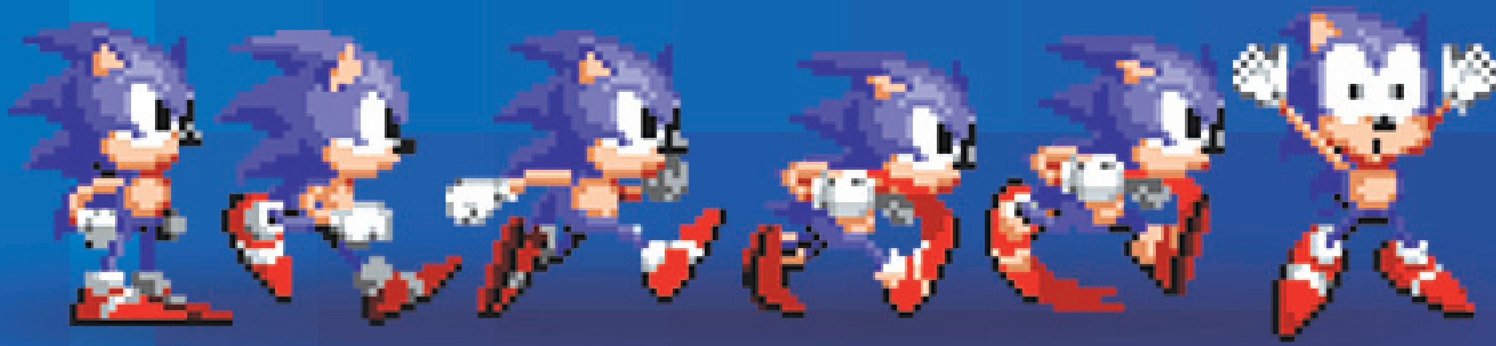
■ 1993
■ Arcade
■ With the home market stitched up, Sega tried its hand in the arcades. But trackerball controls and two new characters failed to inspire gamers. Poor distribution and the fact that the gameplay wasn't the normal 'Sonic style' didn't help.

SONIC THE FIGHTERS



■ 1996
■ Arcade
■ It had been three years since the last arcade *Sonic* outing so it must have seemed time to have another stab at the coin-op fans. Unfortunately, as it was aimed at kids, it lacked depth and proved to be an unrewarding experience.

Sonic Family Tree



In 1990, Sega charged one of its young programmers with the task of creating a character that would rival Nintendo's Mario. Three months later, Yuji Naka unveiled Sonic the Hedgehog, and in 1991 the first of many hog-based games were released. Here's our (almost) definitive list of the titles that the blue spiky one has sped through.

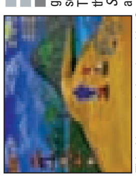
SATURN

SONIC JAM



1997
Sega Saturn
This had nothing to do with preserves, it was more a ploy to get some money from Saturn owners who missed Sonic's *Mega Drive* outings. Aside from a few tweaks and the omission of *Sonic CD*, this was the perfect way to enjoy classic Hog action.

SONIC R



1997
Sega Saturn
A cracking Saturn game that offered something different. This was a 3D racer that pitted familiar *Sonic* characters against one another. This title wasn't developed by Sonic Team but by British developer Travellers Tales.

SONIC JAM



1998
Game.com
Left without a handheld of its own, Sega decided to port a version of *Sonic Jam* to the Game.com, a laughable handheld system. This was a truly awful game riddled with slowdown and without the trademark colourfulness.

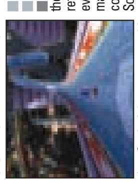
SONIC POCKET ADVENTURE



1999
Neo Geo Pocket Color
'Anything but the GBC' must have been the cry at Sega when it decided to make another portable *Sonic* title. Taking elements from *Sonic 2* and *3*, this had a link-up option so you could race against your friends.

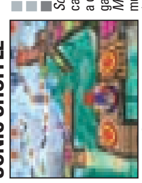
DREAMCAST

SONIC ADVENTURE



1999
Dreamcast
After the demise of the Saturn, Sonic returned faster than ever. Determined to make the new console a success, Sonic Team ensured that *Sonic Adventure* was a big, rollicking adventure that demonstrated the DC's technical proficiency.

SONIC SHUFFLE



2000
Dreamcast
Hot on the heels of *Sonic Adventure* came *Sonic Shuffle* – a collection of puzzle games not unlike *Mario Party* (which must have partly inspired Sega's stab at the genre). It was fairly dire but did have some lovely cel-shaded graphics.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2



2001
Dreamcast
By now the Dreamcast was nearly dead, but it didn't stop Sonic Team releasing one last *Sonic* game on a Sega console. It was Sonic's tenth anniversary – it would have seemed rude not to. But this wasn't the last we'd see of him…

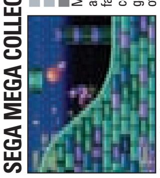
GAMECUBE

SONIC ADVENTURE 2: BATTLE



2002
GameCube
After pulling out of the hardware race, Sega decided to bring the next *Sonic* game to GameCube. This was completely unexpected, but an updated version of the Dreamcast game complete with a two-player mode was more than welcome.

SEGA MEGA COLLECTION

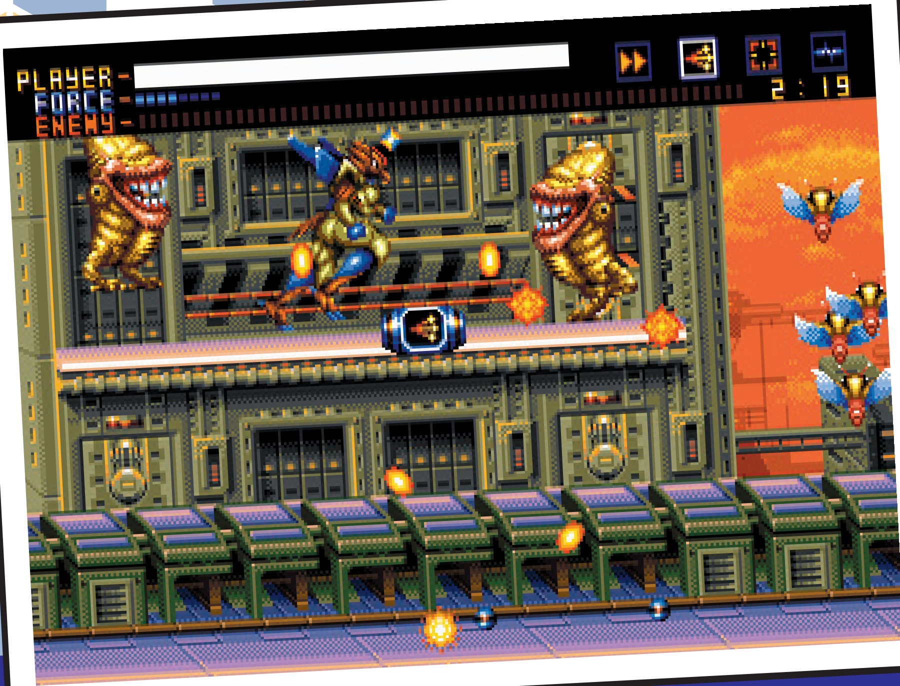


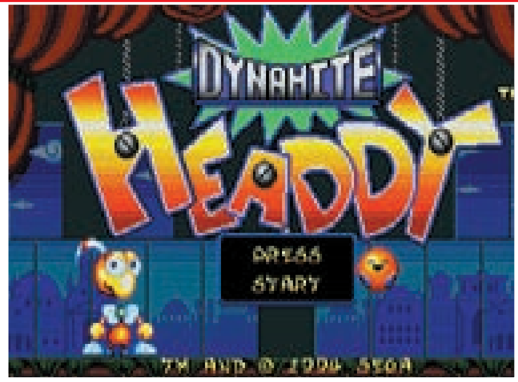
2002
GameCube
Replay those old Mega Drive games as Sega treads the familiar path of collating its classic games for the hordes of gamers clamouring for the titles we played ten years ago. Once again, Sega missed the opportunity to include *Sonic CD*.

SONIC ADVANCE



2002
GBA
Having spurned Nintendo's GBA in favour of less popular handhelds, it was great to see the little fella finally getting the small-screen attention he deserved and in a new adventure which drew upon elements from all his previous outings.







Treasure Chest

Since Gunstar Heroes on the Mega Drive, Treasure has crafted some of the most sought-after (and pricey) Japanese videogames. But is the company truly a box of delights as the name would suggest, or does it simply play on target marketing and quirkiness to sell its niche titles?

Another Konami Konnection

Treasure has recently worked with the *Tiny Toons* licence on two videogames – *Tiny Toons: Defenders Of The Loonyverse* for PlayStation2, and *Tiny Toon Adventures: Buster's Bad Dream* for Game Boy Advance. *Defenders Of The Loonyverse* seems to be stuck in development, but it's interesting that this team of ex-Konami employees should be working with a licence that was once so prolific for Konami itself.



▲ Treasure is currently working with the *Tiny Toons* licence. Can it match the quality of Konami's *Tiny Toon* titles?

Situated in West Shinjuku, Tokyo, Treasure was started up with ¥30 million (approximately £150,000) on 9 June, 1992. Although the company has never been particularly well known among the western gaming masses, in hardcore circles, especially those in Japan, it's common knowledge that many of the founding members and initial programmers and designers that helped to set up the now 32-strong company were ex-Konami staff. It's a similar situation to when a group of Rare employees broke off to form Free Radical.

Of course, back in 1992 when Treasure was started up, graphics technology and the videogames industry in general wasn't nearly as evolved as when Free Radical split from Rare, though there were many parallels between the two new companies. At the time, Konami was still developing 2D sprite-based games and was highly regarded within the industry for the quality of products such as *Turtles In Time*, *Buster Busts Loose* and *The Legend Of the Mystical Ninja* amongst many others.

When Treasure released its first game, *Gunstar Heroes*, it managed to capture all the values that Konami stood for, but at the same time felt new and fresh. Just as Free Radical would later capture much of the spirit and British humour for which Rare was well known, Treasure managed to do exactly the same with Konami in Japan.

Although Treasure's first release came out just one year before Sony launched the PlayStation, the company continued to gain popularity throughout the remainder of the 16-bit era. Further releases such as *Dynamite Headdy* and *Alien Soldier* cemented the Treasure name as one of the premium Mega Drive developers and made it clear that Konami had lost some of its most creative people to this extraordinary little company.

Sadly, the console generation that followed saw a few cracks appearing in some of Treasure's game design. Many of those employed at the company had previously worked predominantly with sprites and 2D scrolling backdrops, while the new line-up of polygon-pushing powerhouses required knowledge of 3D manipulation. Interestingly, Konami also struggled to come to terms with this new type of game – until the questionably average *NBA In The Zone* launched late in 1995, the company's PSone games consisted mostly of retro compilation discs, such as *Parodius*. In fact, it wasn't until the release of *Metal Gear Solid* that Konami proved it could cut the proverbial mustard.

For Treasure, on the other hand, the 32/64-bit generation never really gave the company the opportunity to prove itself,

Treasure Softography

Gunstar Heroes
– Mega Drive/ Game Gear (1993, 1995)

Dynamite Headdy
– Mega Drive/ Game Gear (1994)

McDonald's Treasure Land Adventure
– Mega Drive (1993)

Alien Soldier
– Mega Drive (1995)

Guardian Heroes
– Saturn (1996)

Silhouette Mirage
– Saturn/PlayStation (1997, 1998)

Radiant Silvergun
– Arcade/Saturn (1998)

Bangai-O
– N64/ Dreamcast (1999, 2000)

Rakugaki Showtime
– PlayStation (1999)

Silpheed: Lost Planet
– PlayStation2 (2000)

Sin And Punishment
– Nintendo 64 (2000)

Freak Out
– PlayStation2 (2001)

Ikaruga
– Arcade/Dreamcast/GameCube (2001, 2002, 2003)

Wario World
– GameCube (2003)

Gradius V
– PlayStation2 (2004)

Beat It

One of the only completely 3D games that Treasure worked on was an arcade title called *Gun Beat*. Running on Sega's Naomi board, the game was shown in playable form at numerous shows and was expected to be translated across to the Dreamcast following its release in the arcade.

Similar in design to *Panzer Dragoon*, the gameplay revolved around shooting enemies while galloping along on an enormous hamster. Sadly, the project was canned, and despite rumours that it would be included as an extra with *Ikaruga*, the code has never been released.



▲ Despite looking promising (and a little odd), *Gun Beat* was cancelled prior to its planned launch in 1999.



▲ *Gunstar Heroes* for the Mega Drive and Game Gear was perhaps the definitive side-scrolling shooter of the early Nineties.

other than to the fans who still loved the retro-style titles it was developing. *Guardian Heroes* on the Saturn, for example, was a stunning scrolling beat-'em-up with RPG elements that was massively popular with hardcore Sega fans, but completely ignored by virtually everyone else.

The same can be said for the N64 adventure game *Mischief Makers*, which again only ever received attention from the most hardcore players. But although Treasure never really achieved market saturation with any of its titles, its arcade/Saturn shoot-'em-up *Radiant Silvergun* received plenty of critical acclaim from the press. Only ever released in Japan, this old-school, up-screen extravaganza cleverly used the combined power of the Saturn's 2D and 3D processors to create impressive pseudo 3D environments and some solid 2D gameplay.

The current generation has proved possibly the most difficult for Treasure. With games development costing more than ever before, it's no longer viable for the company to work exclusively on niche market products. With the quality of releases such as *Silpheed: The Lost Planet* and *Freak Out* being questionable at best, if it wasn't for a number of recent partnerships with larger developers, we'd be worrying about the company's future.

After wowing Dreamcast and GameCube owners with the excellent *Ikaruga* – the spiritual successor to *Radiant Silvergun* – Treasure created *Wario World*. There's no doubt Mario's nemesis found himself in an enjoyable platformer, but it lacked much of the charm normally associated with Treasure titles.

Recently, however, Treasure has returned to form and while it's yet to have a truly massive hit, its latest titles have earned it plenty of recognition. While *Astro Boy: Omega Factor* and *Advance Guardian Heroes* have gained Treasure plenty of fans on the GBA, it's the collaboration with Konami on *Gradius V* that has really started turning heads. It may feel a little 'Treasure by numbers' but there's no denying that *Gradius V* is currently the best horizontal scrolling shooter available. Let's just hope it brings Treasure to a wider audience.

Classic Machine



SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: Motorola MC68000
SPEED: 7.16 MHz
RAM: 512 Chip RAM or 1MB Chip RAM on motherboard
ROM: 256K or 512K on motherboard
SOUND: Two stereo audio output ports

Commodore AMIGA



IT MIGHT HAVE LOOKED LIKE A PROPER COMPUTER – YOU KNOW, FOR GROWN UPS – BUT THE AMIGA 500 PROVED TO BE A TREAT FOR GAMERS EVERYWHERE (ADULT OR OTHERWISE)

With the Commodore 64 such a firm favourite with gamers, expectations were high when Commodore announced an (unofficial) follow up. Released in 1987, the Amiga 500 instantly became a classic thanks to some savvy marketing by Commodore and it easily set itself apart from Atari's slightly inferior ST.

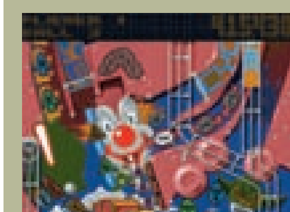
When the Amiga 1000 had been released in 1985 it was seen more as a business machine and its high price put off many potential buyers. Fortunately, Commodore released a lower spec machine at an affordable price and the Amiga 500 that we all know and love was delivered into the hands of grateful gamers.

Pre-loaded with Commodore's popular (though often bugged) Workbench application, the 500 quickly proved itself to be an extremely versatile machine that was just at home calculating spreadsheets as it was playing the likes of *Populous* or *Shadow Of The Beast*. Gamers were in awe of the fantastic visuals and superior sound that the Amiga offered and it was arguably a key suspect in the death of the 8-bit market.

Unfortunately, Commodore's insistence on bringing out new machines at an alarming rate meant that the company eventually found itself in financial difficulties. Commodore's dream is now long dead but at least we still have fond memories.

You've got to be kidding

ANYTHING WITH '32' IN ITS NAME IS GOING TO BE BAD





We'll admit to being among the many suckers who were tricked into buying Commodore's ill-fated CD32 that was released in the company's final days. Though technically impressive, the games failed to deliver, with many titles just straight ports of their Amiga 500 or 1200 counterparts. Sure, you may have been able to play the likes of *Worms* and *Pinball Fantasies* with a joypad, but this did little to stop you from feeling pretty ripped off at having paid £329 for the privilege.

"Why I love my Amiga"

I still have vivid memories of walking into my local Adam's World shop and using every penny of my savings to buy my Amiga all those years ago, complete with a copy of *Speedball 2*, which the shop assistant assured me was brilliant. It was a real step forward from everything else at the time and can still hold its own as a 'proper' computer as well as a games machine today. Plus it helped keep me off the streets for many of my adolescent years…

Martin Mathers

500



Classic Machine



AMIGA



Six of the Best

The advanced power of the Amiga 500 meant that it was home to a selection of fantastic games, many of which have never been bettered

SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE

Developer: **Bitmap Brothers**
Year: **1990**

It seems like we're always harping on about the Bitmap Brothers' classic future sport, but honestly, it's really that good. Nothing can prepare you for the sheer ferocity that a single gruelling match can contain; the action throughout is incredibly fast and frenetic and doesn't let up for a single second. Visuals are extremely well drawn and feature that typical metallic sheen which quickly became the Bitmap's trademark, and who could forget the wonderful shouts for "Ice cream, ice cream"? If ever there was an instant classic, this was it. You must play this before you die.



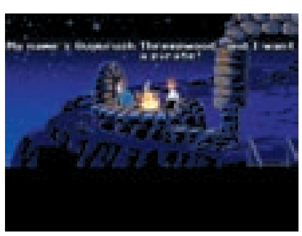


THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Developer: **LucasArts**
Year: **1991**

LucasArts' first foray into the world of pirates and treachery is one of its best-loved classics and still proves to be an enjoyable romp today. All of the LucasArts trademarks were in place, from the mind-bending puzzles to the quirky storyline that was made even more enjoyable by the fantastic sense of humour that prevailed throughout. Taking on the role of wannabe pirate Guybrush Threepwood, you soon found yourself immersed in an engaging point-and-click adventure that eventually went on to spawn three sequels.

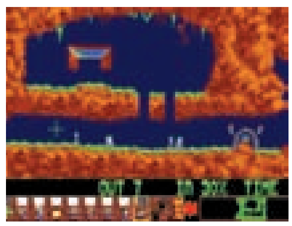




LEMMINGS

Developer: **Psygnosis**
Year: **1991**

Controlling a bunch of suicidal rodents may not sound like fun, but it was sheer gaming heaven. Extremely simple in execution – guide a set number of the little critters to an exit – the fiendish levels took an age to master. *Lemmings* was a massive success and quickly appeared on practically every home system. Although there were many different breeds of Lemming – including Climbers, Blockers and Diggers – nothing was more satisfying than setting a hapless rodent to self-destruct and waiting to hear their customary cries of "Oh No".

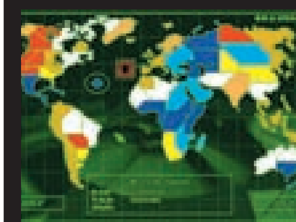


▲ It looks easy now, but just you wait…

SYNDICATE

Developer: **Bullfrog**
Year: **1993**

Bullfrog confirmed its reputation for delivering classic strategy titles with the excellent *Syndicate*. Set in the typical 'not too distant future', the game saw you controlling a squad of four androids in an attempt to wipe out opposing Syndicates. Once your androids were suitably equipped, you could unleash them on the wonderfully detailed 3D isometric settings. Missions were extremely involving and would range from kidnappings to complex assassinations. Above all, though, the game was incredibly violent and great fun.



▲ Ignore the map, this was actually great fun.

SENSIBLE SOCCER

Developer: **Sensible Software**
Year: **1991**

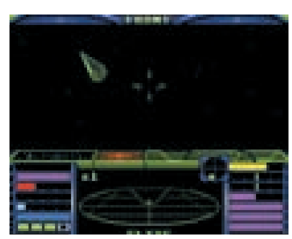
Before *Pro Evo*, this was the title that was considered king of football. It might not look like much now, but in its day, gamers couldn't get enough of *Sensible Software*'s classic interpretation of the beautiful game. Every player was superbly animated and could pull off all manner of shots and passes. There were plenty of updates to ensure that each team was as up-to-date as possible and the gameplay throughout the series was unrivalled. *Sensible Soccer* will always have a special place in our hearts.



ELITE

Developer: **Acornsoft**
Year: **1988**

While many will have fond memories of *Elite* on the early 8-bit computers, the arrival of the Amiga meant that gamers could experience the classic trading game in a whole new way. Ships were now easy to identify (thanks to the power of 16-bit graphics) and *The Blue Danube* finally sounded like it was supposed to. Of course, 16-bit power also meant that the game was now finally able to tear away from its original 32K roots. Though many preferred *Elite*'s sequel, *Frontier*, true aficionados will always swear by the original.



S·P·E·E·D·B·A·L·L 2: B·R·U·T·A·L D·E·L·U·X·E

BACK IN 1990, THE CRY OF "ICE CREAM, ICE CREAM" HAD VERY SINISTER OVERTONES

Borrowing heavily from Norman Jewison's pompous 1975 flick *Rollerball*, the original *Speedball* from legendary coders The Bitmap Brothers was a futuristic team sports game in which kicking the hell out of your opponents was just as important (or at least as satisfying) as scoring goals. Its mix of fast-paced play, extreme violence and management elements deservedly made it one of the most popular titles of its day.

However, two years down the line the highly anticipated sequel came along and completely tore up the rulebook – not that there were too many rules in the first game. *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* took the key elements that had made its predecessor so great and then chucked in a plethora of new features to spice things up. The graphics were better (they still had the Bitmap Brothers's highly stylised metallic look to them), the playing area was bigger (the cramped arenas of the original had come in for some criticism) and the action itself was faster and more aggressive.

In one-player mode it was your task to take Brutal Deluxe (a no-hoper team of thugs) through a series of league, cup and knock-out competitions. This was all good fun, but the real pleasure was to be had in the exceptionally addictive two-player mode. With two equally-matched players going at it, games could become impossibly competitive – to a point where blows were being landed both on the screen and off it.

So what made the game so good? Essentially the gameplay remained true to that of the original – namely, two teams of armour-clad players attempting to outscore one another. The inclusion of two ramp-like score multipliers was the real stroke of genius, however. By rolling your ball up these, the value of any subsequent points you scored was increased. If a team did this twice then point values went through the roof. Fortunately, the effects of this could be nullified if the opposition rolled the ball back up the ramp. What this led to was a series of brutal challenges being exchanged around the multipliers, with neither team wanting to let the other get away with an advantage.

Furthermore, an electroball unit allowed you to turn the ball into a formidable weapon for a limited time (canny players linked this with the multiplier for added effect). Best of all, if a particular player took too much of a drubbing he keeled over and was unceremoniously removed by two robotic stretcherbearers, all to the immortal sound of an off-screen vendor yelling "Ice cream, ice cream". As playable today as it was on its release, *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* is a masterclass in great game design. Just don't get us started on the abomination that was *Speedball 2100*…



Format(s): **Amiga/Atari ST (first), PC, C64, NES, Master System, Mega Drive, Game Boy, CD32, Game Boy Advance**
Release date: **1990**
Publisher: **Image Works**
Developer: **The Bitmap Brothers**

Greatest RETRO Game Ever



▼ Defeating reigning champions Super Nashwan required a mixture of skill, cunning and extreme violence.



▼ As you progressed through the ranks it was possible to bolster your squad's ability and dabble in the transfer market.

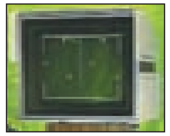
SHOOTING STARS

Unlike the first game, points could be amassed not only by slamming the metallic ball into your opponent's goal, but also by hitting stars located on the arena walls. If you could illuminate a row of these then yet more bonus points were awarded. Sounds easy in theory, but when opposing players were kicking the hell out of you, aiming accurately became that little bit trickier.

FOOTBALL FAMILY TREE

Ever since the concept of two sticks deflecting a square dot around the screen so admirably managed to recreate all the thrills of tennis, developers have seized upon the challenge of recreating our national sport to similar effect. Over the years many have tried, and almost as many have failed, but a trail of gems has been left behind en route to eventually achieving the sublime gameplay Konami's Pro Evolution series showcases today.

SOCCER



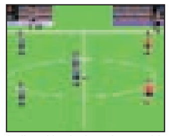
- Arcade
- 1973
- Taito's *Soccer* was one of several arcade titles to take the popular *Pong* concept and simply introduce a set of goalposts at either end of the screen. There was little advance on this makeshift paddle-based model as the decade wore on.

SOCCER



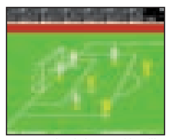
- Intellivision
- 1980
- Finally trading paddles for stickmen, this was really where the genre began to take shape. Of the earliest console football titles, *Soccer* was arguably the best looking and contained several features that made it into many later games.

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER



- C64
- 1983
- *International Soccer* by Andrew Spencer was so good it was the football title of choice for five years. It was the first game with a bouncing ball and had a bug that enabled you to balance the ball on your head and walk it into the goal.

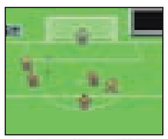
MATCH DAY



- Spectrum
- 1985
- Jon Ritman's *Match Day* was a massive success upon its release and went straight to the top of the charts, where it stayed for two months. It featured intelligent players and was the first football game to have a power bar.

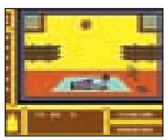
MINI-GAMES

PETER SHILTON'S HANDBALL MARADONA



- Various
- 1986
- Oh dear. Quickly cashing in on the infamous Maradona incident, players were placed in the boots of a goalie and tasked with keeping the ball out of his net. While it was a new idea, its lacklustre gameplay added nothing to the genre.

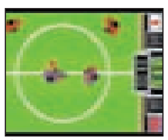
GARY LINEKER'S SUPER SKILLS



- Various
- 1988
- No doubt released because of the popular joystick waggling games, *Super Skills* basically consisted of you taking part in various training routines. *Super Skills* was incredibly basic and another poor spin-off for the genre.

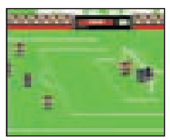
VIOLENCE

FIGHTING SOCCER



- Various
- 1989
- Activision's conversion of SNK's arcade game added yet another facet to the genre. Rather than a game based on passing, *Fighting Soccer*'s cramped arenas and fast defenders meant that games erupted into fierce battles for the ball.

MATCH DAY 2



- Various
- 1988
- Ritman returned with a superb follow-up to the excellent *Match Day*. New features included the diamond deflection system, barging and the excellent Kickometer. Unfortunately, *Match Day 3* (an arcade game for Rare) never appeared.

LICENSED

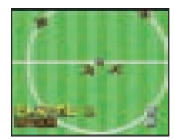
EMLYN HUGHES' INTERNATIONAL SOCCER



- Commodore 64
- 1988
- Now this was how to use a licence. Basically an update of Spencer's *International Soccer*, *Emlyn Hughes* added sliding tackles, long and short passes and additional frames of animation to create a fantastic football experience.

TOP-DOWN

MICROPROSE SOCCER



- Various
- 1989
- *Microprose Soccer*'s top-down view marked a massive change for the genre and also included yet another new feature – the outrageous banana shot. The game also featured action replays, fouls and variable weather conditions.

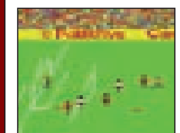
KICK OFF



- Various
- 1989
- The arrival of the 16-bit computers gave football games a new lease of life. Dino Dini's *Kick Off* featured enhanced visuals and silky-smooth scrolling. The fantastic sequel followed soon after, introducing real teams and players.

MANAGEMENT

FOOTBALL MANAGER



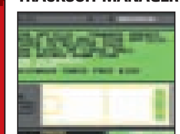
- Spectrum
- 1982
- It may have had one of the most archaic interfaces known to modern man (and horribly crude match highlights), but Kevin Tom's *Football Manager* was a massive success and set the blueprint for many future management games.

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR



- Spectrum
- 1986
- Focusing on absorbing strategy rather than sub-standard graphical gimmicks might be the secret of *Champ Manager*'s success, but *Football Director* was the first title to take this no-frills route to gameplay excellence.

TRACKSUIT MANAGER



- Various
- 1988
- With the *Football Manager* series still ruling the roost, *Tracksuit Manager* gave it a very rude wake-up call. Using an excellent interface and superb scrolling match commentary, this was manna from football management heaven.

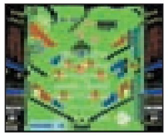
PLAYER MANAGER



- Various
- 1990
- Built on the back of *Kick Off 2*'s immense playability, Anco expanded the concept to incorporate the ever-popular managerial side of things. The hybrid title inspired many later games to fuse the genres, including the mighty *SWOS*.

ARCADE

SOCCER PINBALL



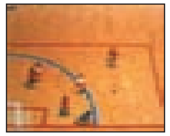
- Various
- 1992
- Not as bizarre a combination as it might first sound. Using a traditional football field as the table's backdrop, *Soccer Pinball* proved to be a fun and challenging pinball game. It's a very tenuous link, though, and one for fans only.

SOCCER BRAWL



- Arcade
- 1991
- SNK's *Soccer Brawl* was a massive improvement over *Fighting Soccer* and gave players a selection of devastating manoeuvres to help them win the ball from the opposition. Incredibly fast and slick to play, it's still enjoyable today.

STRIKER



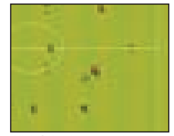
- SNES
- 1993
- One of the first games available for the SNES, *Striker* built heavily on the rather primitive Amiga version and offered both traditional and five-a-side matches. Eventually losing its crown to *ISS*, *Striker* was an incredibly satisfying game.

FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER



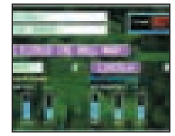
- Mega Drive
- 1994
- Once upon a time the *FIFA* series actually meant something. With its isometric viewpoint, superb presentation and passable gameplay, this was one of the Mega Drive's best football titles. Sadly, the years have not been kind…

SENSIBLE SOCCER



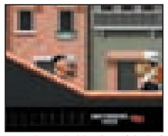
- Various
- 1992
- Arguably the most playable football title of the entire decade, *Sensible Soccer* used the same top-down perspective popularised by the *Kick Off* series to produce a footballing legend that has aged in the visual department only.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER



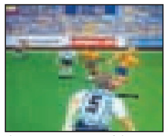
- PC
- 1992
- And lo the legend was born. Initially dismissed by many for its lack of visual stimulation, *Champ Manager* endured by out-performing its peers in the areas that mattered. A true landmark whose ingenious formula has never been matched.

SOCCER KID



- Various
- 1994
- When an evil alien makes off with a soccer cup, only Soccer Kid is able to retrieve it. Using his nifty ball skills, our hero must battle his way through this cheerful platform adventure. Surprisingly, it wasn't as bad as it sounds…

VIRTUA STRIKER



- Arcade
- 1994
- While SEGA has created some fantastic *Virtua* games, the *Virtua Striker* series failed to live up to its peers. Despite releasing a total of three games, none of them managed to achieve the gameplay quality for which Sega is renowned.

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER



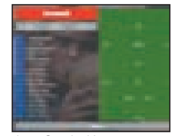
- SNES
- 1994
- Konami's debut performance might not quite have mirrored its world-beating form of late, but signs of great potential were already shining through. In Japan, *Perfect 11* similarly laid the foundations of the *Winning Eleven* series.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



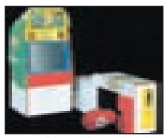
- Amiga
- 1993
- Taking *Sensible Soccer's* sublime gameplay to new heights, *SWOS* introduced an intensive managerial element and featured an incredible collection of worldwide leagues. Many still hail *SWOS* as the greatest football title ever made.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2



- PC
- 1995
- Possibly the greatest leap forward for the series, *CM2* was far too complex to make it onto the Amiga as its predecessor had done. Cue the biggest reason ever for investing in a PC, purely to experience this game's endless rewards.

WORLD PK SOCCER



- Arcade
- 1994
- During the heyday of arm-wrestling machines and quirky arcade peripherals, Jaleco's penalty-kick simulator slotted in nicely. For a small fee you could experience the shame of missing a penalty in front of your on-looking mates.

ACTUA SOCCER



- Various
- 1995
- The introduction of a 3D perspective sadly put an end to the top-down titles' dominance of the early Nineties, and Gremlin's *Actua Soccer* was among the big titles to take advantage of the technology that was revolutionising the genre.

FIFA FOOTBALL 96



- Various
- 1995
- As the novelty of *FIFA's* visuals wore off, the fickle gameplay had begun to stick out like the sore thumbs we had from playing too much *Sensible Soccer*. However, an impressive transition to 3D gave the series a new lease of life.

SENSIBLE SOCCER 98



- Various
- 1998
- Struggling to keep up with the new generation of 3D titles, *Sensible* overhauled its visuals and introduced fully 3D replays. Retaining the classic top-down viewpoint, it was superb to play but many had already converted to *FIFA* or *ISS*.

ISS 64



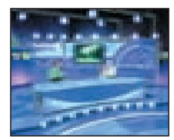
- N64
- 1997
- With its flurry of yearly incarnations, *FIFA* had started to pull away from the chasing pack as the title of choice for football fans. Yet *ISS 64* began to see Konami's series emerging as a serious alternative to EA's bestseller.

THIS IS FOOTBALL



- PSone
- 1999
- The PSone was never short of botched attempts to rival *FIFA*, but Sony's *TIF* publicly promised to bring a new level of playability to the genre. Sadly, the game's failure to deliver ensured it never caused the upset many had touted.

LMA MANAGER



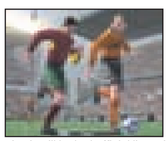
- PSone
- 1999
- *LMA Manager* sported such appealing match visuals that many were tempted to give the idea of a console-based management sim one last chance. Despite the eye candy, however, the strategic side proved to be as shallow as ever.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3



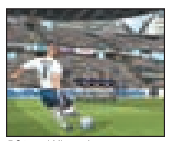
- PC
- 1999
- After a couple of seasonal updates, *Champ Manager* fans were finally treated to another full sequel that overhauled the interface and introduced more realism than ever. Another three updates followed before *CM4* made its bow.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER



- PS2
- 2001
- The series came a long way during its days on the PSone, and *Pro Evo's* debut on the PS2 was widely acclaimed as the world's premier football sim. It still lacked official licensing, but completely eclipsed the competition in terms of gameplay.

DAVID BECKHAM SOCCER



- Various
- 2001
- Rage snapped up the lucrative Beckham licence in the hope of recreating the success it had with *Striker*. First appearing on PSone and GBA, then later PS2 and Xbox, the game was promptly swatted aside by *FIFA* and *Pro Evolution*.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3



- PS2
- 2003
- The series' third instalment on the PS2 enhances the unrivalled gameplay even further to produce the most realistic, fluid and downright playable simulation of football ever made. Closest rival *FIFA* fell off the pace long ago.

ISS 3



- Various
- 2003
- While the *Pro Evolution* series took precision gameplay to new heights, Konami sent the original *ISS* franchise on a more arcade-style route. *ISS 3* showcased slightly better visuals than *Pro Evo*, but distinctly lacked finesse on the pitch.

CLUB FOOTBALL



- Various
- 2003
- Last year's main challenge to Konami and EA's footballing giants came in the form of Codemasters' *Club Football*. Despite offering 17 club-specific versions and great visuals, the match action itself was actually less fluid than *FIFA*.

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004



- Various
- 2003
- Right on schedule, EA's annual upgrade to the *FIFA* series hit the shelves in time for Christmas. Despite offering a plethora of alluring features, the all-important gameplay action once again comes a poor second best to *Pro Evo*.

TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004



- Various
- 2003
- With the *FIFA* engine powering its match visuals, EA's *TCM 2003* enjoyed reasonable success on the PC. The latest version makes its debut on PS2 and Xbox, and allows players to import their carefully sculpted team into *FIFA 2004*.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4



- PC
- 2003
- Pockets of hard-core fans were up in arms when *CM4* meddled with the age-old formula and introduced a 2D match engine, yet most of us rejoiced to see our tactics being played out before our eyes without any forfeiture of realism.

Sam & Max Hit the Road

Greatest Retro Game Ever

FORGET PIRATES OR EVIL TENTACLES – LUCASARTS' FINEST HOUR STARRED A WISECRACKING DOG AND A PSYCHOPATHIC RABBIT. HONESTLY…

Format: PC
Release: 1993
Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: In-House

With games like *Maniac Mansion, Zak McKraken And The Alien Mindbenders* and *The Secret Of Monkey Island* already proving huge successes with PC gamers in the late Eighties and early Nineties, it was clear to LucasArts that point-and-click adventures were a big thing. This may have had something to do with the revolutionary new process (for the time) that the company had taken to using for its adventure games. Created to power the original *Maniac Mansion*, the SCUMM (Script Creation Utility for *Maniac Mansion*) engine was initially programmed by Lucasfilm Games' employees Ron Gilbert and Aric Wilmunder after Gilbert decided he'd had enough of adventure games that had user-unfriendly environments and made dying repeatedly part of the process of solving puzzles.

SCUMM got around this by allowing gamers to build their own sentences using a graphical interface, rather than having to type things and hope the game understood; verbs (provided by the game's word interface) and nouns (items in the player's inventory or near them on screen) could be combined to try virtually anything, without causing hair-pulling frustration.

While the technology was slowly improving, LucasArts decided it also needed some fresh blood to create characters worthy of becoming the stars of its adventures. Having already produced two *Monkey Island* games and with *Day Of The Tentacle* updating the *Maniac Mansion* licence, it was time for some new ideas, and for that LucasArts looked within its own ranks. Enter Steve Purcell – animator on a number of projects for LucasArts and the man behind a pair of cult comic book characters called Sam and Max.



▲ Most of the characters you'll meet are helpful in a cryptic sort of way if you ply them with enough candy.

Purcell had masterminded the adventures of Sam (a smart-talking dog detective in a suit) and Max (his three-foot-high hyperactive and slightly sociopathic rabbit sidekick) since 1987 when their first 32-page comic appeared, although the man himself admits to pinching the original characters from his younger brother during childhood.

Thanks to a combination of slapstick humour, bizarre antics and inadvertent crime-solving, Sam and Max hit people's funny bones, but it was only through a chance invitation to create an original comic strip for a LucasArts newsletter that Purcell's



▲ Max has plenty of deep-seated psychopathic tendencies – he just loves pounding on virtually anyone.

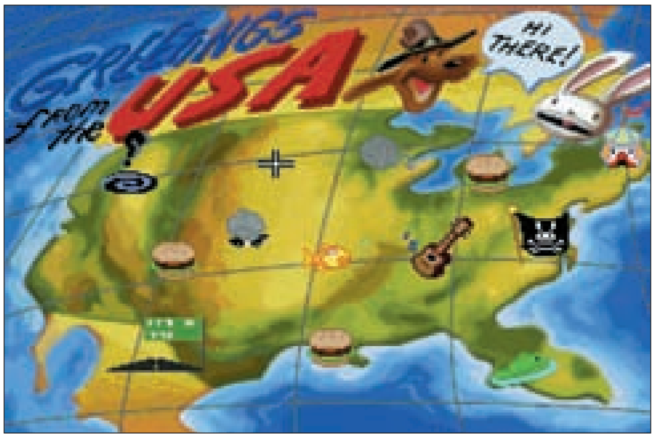


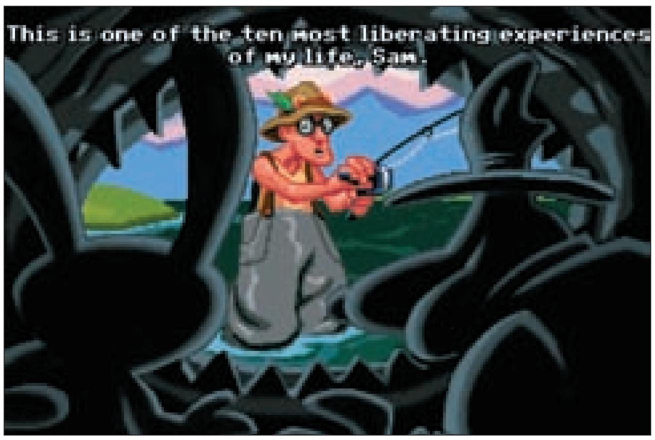
▲ Sam's overly cynical view of the world makes an appearance more than once during your adventure…

MADE FOR TELEVISION

Sam & Max Hit The Road **wasn't the only way in which the crime-fighting pair managed to make their mark outside the world of comic books. Late in 1997, a Canadian animation company called Nelvana produced a 13-episode series of *Sam And Max: Freelance Police* featuring the duo's adventures. The pair visited a restaurant run by aliens, misused a wristwatch capable of time travel, fought an arch nemesis called Mack Salmon – all with the help of The Geek, a teenage genius who lived in their basement. While the cartoon was both strange and hilarious, Fox cancelled it after just one run. However, it can still be found on video (NTSC only, sadly), and clips from the series are lurking on the internet.**







WOT, NO SEQUEL?

With the news that LucasArts has canned the upcoming sequel to *Hit The Road*, it should come as no surprise that dedicated fans are in uproar. Petitions have sprung up all over the internet and emails of complaint have been pouring into LucasArts' mailbox. According to the unofficial Sam and Max fan website (www.samandmax.net), the duo's creator, Steve Purcell, isn't exactly happy about the decision either. "I'm extremely frustrated and disappointed," he said, "especially for the team who have devoted so much effort and creativity to Sam and Max. It's a shame to think that their accomplishments, as well as the goodwill that has been growing in the gaming press toward this project, will all go to waste due to this short-sighted decision." You know, we couldn't have put it better ourselves…

creations were let into the Lucas fold. Parodies of *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* and other classic LucasArts games followed, which no doubt helped to seal the deal when the time came for the idea of a game based on the troublesome twosome.

And so *Sam & Max Hit The Road* was born. Working closely with the directing and producing talents of Sean Clarke and Mike Stemmle, Purcell's twisted humour was turned into a hugely popular point-and-click adventure. The game saw everyone's favourite freelance police officers take on the case of Bruno the Bigfoot, who has gone missing from the local carnival and appears to have taken the show's next-best freak, Trixie the Giraffe-Necked Girl, with him.

Tracking down the pair takes Sam and Max to plenty of strange locations all over America including the World's Largest Ball Of Twine, the Mystery Vortex, Bumpusville (home of renowned country and western singer Conrad Bumpus) and many more besides. However, it was the way that the game managed to capture the madcap style of the comic book while maintaining the point-and-click stylings of previous LucasArts adventures that made *Hit The Road* so popular with fans of both games and comics – rarely has a game featured so many laugh-out-loud moments without becoming stale or repetitive.

The game also heralded an improvement in the ageing SCUMM engine. Originally using simple text to show the player's verb options and inventory, the engine had improved through games like *Monkey Island* and *Day Of The Tentacle* to move into visual representations for items that the player had to hand – however, the verb menu remained in text form. In *Hit The Road*, though, LucasArts evolved the engine into a completely visual-driven form by introducing a cycling verb icon; actions like Use, Look At, Talk To, Walk To and Pick Up were changed into visual representations and combined into a single pointer, which could be changed simply by hitting the right mouse button. It might have been a minor tweak, but it made playing *Hit The Road* much easier – something that you'd be thankful for if you'd ever experienced the game's incredibly twisted logic.

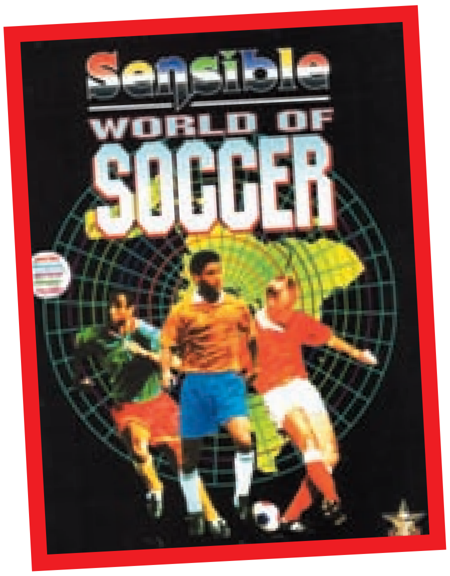
Sadly, if you've been looking forward to any more gaming adventures with Sam and Max, you're going to have a long wait. Despite being longed for by many gamers, development of the promised sequel – *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* – has been cancelled by LucasArts. "After careful evaluation of current marketplace realities and underlying economic considerations, we've decided that this was not the appropriate time to launch a graphic adventure on the PC," said Mike Nelson, acting general manager and VP of finance and operations at LucasArts. Fair enough, you might think, but then if the alternative is the continued milking of the *Star Wars* licence until the end of time, we know which one we'd rather have. We reckon there's still life in the old dog (and rabbit) yet.

Presentation: A hilarious rollercoaster ride from beginning to end	95%
Graphics The crazy world of Sam and Max never looked so good	92%
Sound The voice-over on the CD version makes things better	93%
Gameplay Twisted comedy, but with twisted puzzles too – very tricky	91%
Lifespan If you can work out the brain-bending puzzles, it's over too quickly	88%
OVERALL	**94%**

Why Don't They Remake?

S•E•N•S•I•B•L•E W•O•R•L•D O•F S•O•C•C•E•R





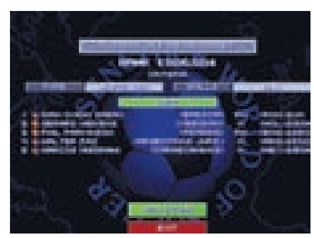
Format: **Amiga, PC**
Released: **1995**
Publisher: **Renegade Software**
Developer: **Sensible Software**

Football games these days can be divided firmly into two categories, namely arcade and management. Occasionally one will try its hand at the other – arcade games featuring leagues and customisation options, or sim games allowing players to take control on the pitch. The problem here is that the adventurous elements often feel either poorly executed or insubstantial. But what if one game could successfully straddle both variants, offering a highly playable soccer game with as much freedom and depth as any management title?

Such a game does exist and it's not something we're looking forward to, rather something we're rediscovering. All rise for the king of sports games, *Sensible World Of Soccer*. Featuring an obscene amount of teams and players (in the region of 1,500 and 30,000 respectively), *SWOS* was – and, to some, still is – the quintessential sports simulation. Serving up both short-term thrills and longevity to die for (how many other games can boast 20 years' worth of management?), the simplistic front-end and style hid a level of playability that is arguably yet to be beaten. The frequent mistake with footie games is that simplicity is an art form and while modern soccer titles strive for realism, learning to play them is often much more complicated than it needs to be.

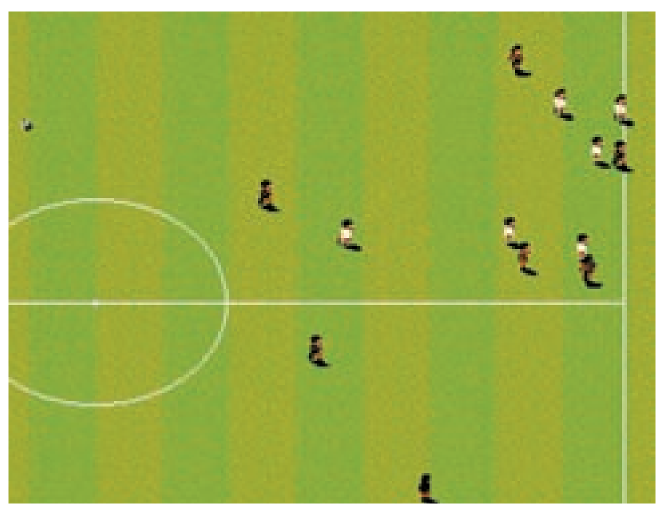
Perhaps even better than the game itself is the variety of ways in which a remake could be handled. At the simplest end of the spectrum, the Game Boy Advance lends itself perfectly to the game, and with updates to rosters and leagues could be one of the most concise footy games in years. Better still, the series could be moved to a new home on one of the big three consoles – retaining the same viewpoint but with 3D characters would be a distinct possibility, and provided the same tight control could be implemented, we'd be looking at a winner.

Throw in some of the crowning glories of this most recent generation of consoles and the appeal grows further still – imagine team line-ups and values being constantly updated online. Imagine buying, selling and trading players over the net. Imagine playing in leagues or tournaments where every club is controlled by another player somewhere else in the world. All very real possibilities, but will we ever see them take shape? We seriously hope so, although for the sake of our social lives, we're sort of hoping not…

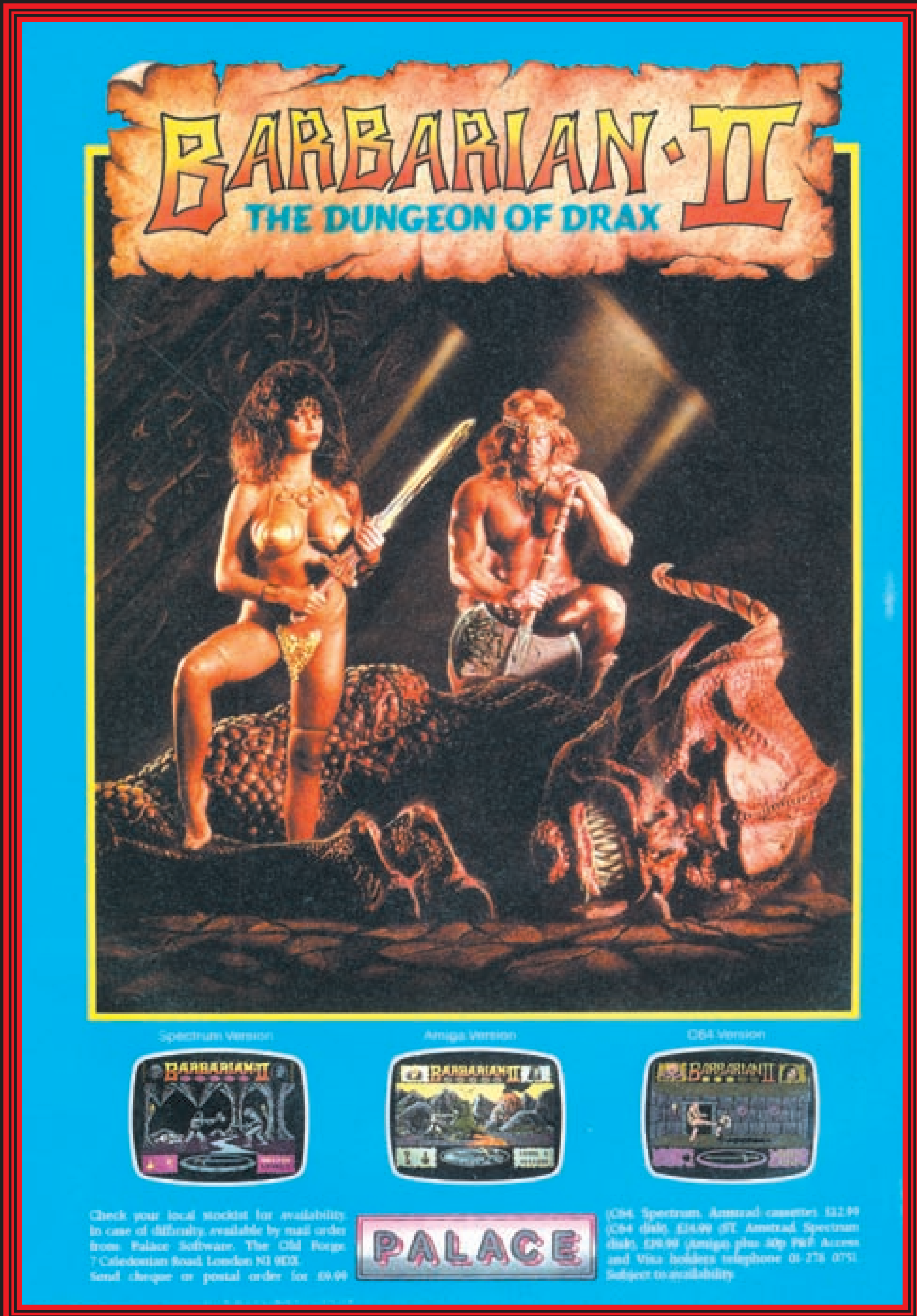




▲ *Sensible World Of Soccer* combined the best elements of football gaming – plenty of stats, a plethora of management options and complete freedom to do what you liked with your team…



▲ … but there was also plenty of yer actual ball-on-pitch action. Will we ever see such a perfect combination again? Well, if anyone wants to remake *SWOS* we'd be interested…



BARBARIAN II (Various Home Systems) Palace Software, 1988 – UK Advertisement



Now there's something you don't see every day **Secret Of Monkey Island – Macintosh [LucasArts] 1990**



Classic Machine

THE HARDWARE WARS BETWEEN 8-BIT OWNERS WERE INTENSE, BUT THE ARRIVAL OF THE ATARI 520 ST MEANT COMMODORE'S 16-BIT AMIGA HAD A FIERCE RIVAL TO FACE



Although Atari used to be synonymous with home consoles, the games industry crash of 1983 saw a number of other companies begin to gain prominence in a once monopolised industry. Unperturbed by the firm's collapse and eager to release his new computer that was based on the Amiga chipset (something Atari had already paid huge development fees towards), Atari's owner, Jack Tramiel, began to rebuild his empire. Despite buying back the remains of Atari from Warner, Tramiel was furious to discover that Commodore had bought the Amiga. Realising that his new rival would soon launch a superior product, Tramiel carried on the development of a system that originally began at Commodore. Taking the key engineer of Commodore's project, Shiraz Shivji, with him, Tramiel set to work on what would become the Atari 520 ST.

Considering the machine arrived in shops within a year of its conception, it was unsurprising that the ST was unable to match the Amiga for sheer build or technical quality. However, thanks to being significantly cheaper than its rival – as well as coming equipped with built-in Midi ports – the ST went on to become extremely popular (especially in Europe) and was of particular interest to musicians who used it as a sequencer and for controlling various instruments.Of course, gamers were also well catered for and after early letdowns like *Black Lamp*, the likes of *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe, Xenon 2* and *Carrier Command* helped show that the ST was quite capable of playing the latest games. We've lost count of the hours we've wasted on the likes of *Dungeon Master* and *Rainbow Islands* (much better than the Amiga port, in our opinion) not to mention browsing through the huge amount of shareware that was available. It might not have had the impressive specs of its nearest rival, but the Atari 520 ST still deserves a place in many a gamer's heart and is well worth pulling out from whatever dusty corner yours is currently filling.

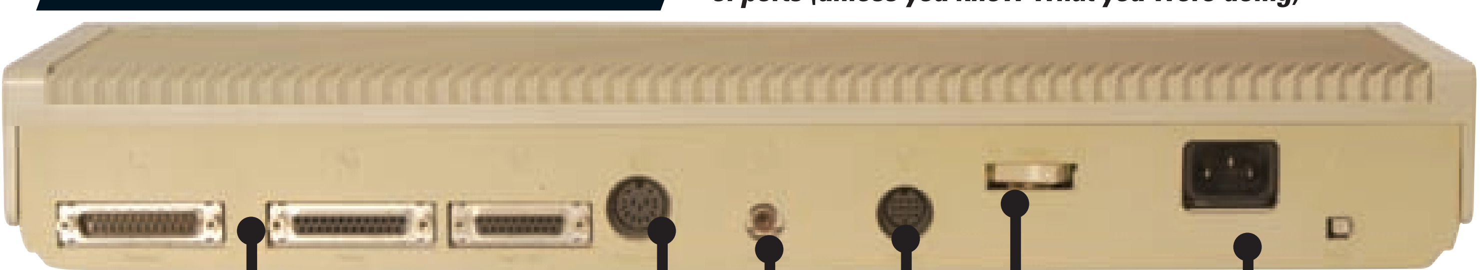
SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: Motorola 68000
SPEED: 8 Mhz
RAM: 512K
SOUND: Yamaha YM2149
OPERATING SYSTEM: TOS (Tramiel Operating System)
DRIVE: Single-sided 3 1/2" floppy disc drive
DISPLAY MODES: 320X200 (16 colour), 640X200 (four colour), 640X400 (mono), palette of 512 colours

ATARI 520ST

AROUND THE BACK

Turn round your ST and you'd find a baffling array of ports (unless you knew what you were doing)



The first three ports provided you with access to a modem, printer and hard disc. Hardly revolutionary by today's standards, but then, this was the early Nineties…

Here you'd find support for an additional floppy drive and connections for either a television or monitor (like the Amiga, the ST could run through either).

You won't get anywhere without power, and Atari thoughtfully provided the 520 ST with a standard power switch and a reset button.



SHARE THE WEALTH



One problem with Atari games was the amount of discs needed to store the games. You could tell how complex a title was by feeling the weight of the box.

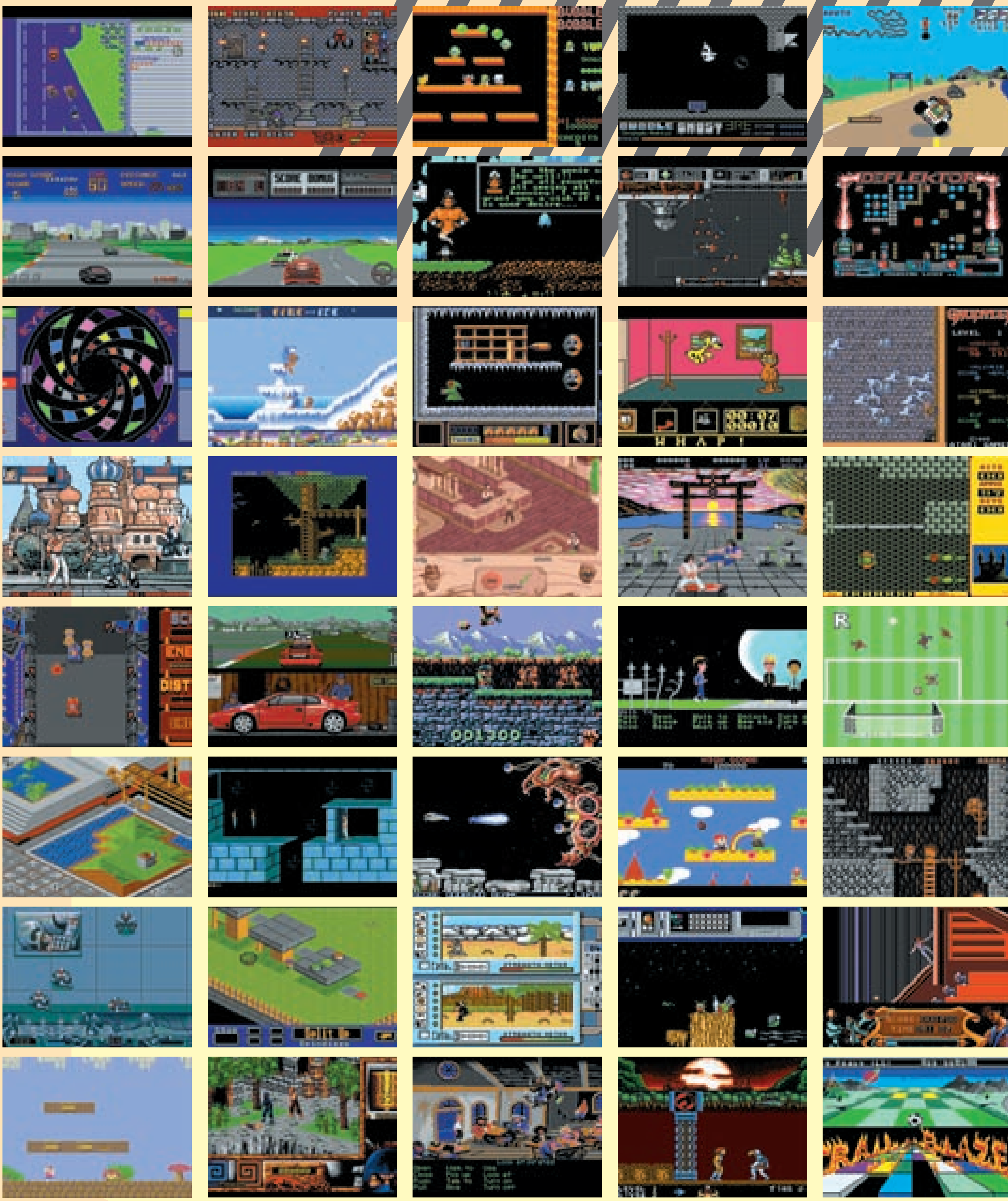
One of the great things about the Atari ST was the massive amount of public domain software (shareware) that was available for the machine. Public domain is basically software that can be used freely without the user having to worry about licensing or fees. The majority of shareware would often feature animated cartoons or pornography, but there were also a number of decent little games available. Even now, a healthy selection of public domain exists for both the Atari ST and Amiga, and thanks to the advent of the internet, getting hold of it is a lot easier.

"WHY I LOVE MY ATARI ST"

Although my Amstrad CPC 464 had pride of place for many years, it was inevitable that I would have to embrace the 16-bit generation. With Commodore's impressive Amiga being just outside my meagre budget, Atari's machine made perfect sense. So began an obsessive part of my life that saw me wasting far too much time on the likes of *Speedball 2* and the outstanding *Dungeon Master* (which, incidentally, taught me how to draw meticulously detailed maps on squared paper). The ST may now be gathering dust with a stack of shareware titles and old classics, but I'll never forget the glory years of '93 and '94.

Darran Jones

Classic Machine



ATARI 520ST



Six of the Best

The Atari boasted plenty of great games, and its Midi capabilities made them sound excellent. These are just some of the best…

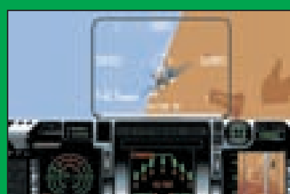
Dungeon Master

Publisher: Mirrorsoft
Year: 1987

Few will be able to forget the revolutionary impact *Dungeon Master* had when it appeared in 1987. Featuring real-time 3D visuals and a unique mouse system, this RPG was like nothing else around and represented a huge leap forward for the genre. Such was its success it went on to spawn four sequels.



F-29 Retaliator



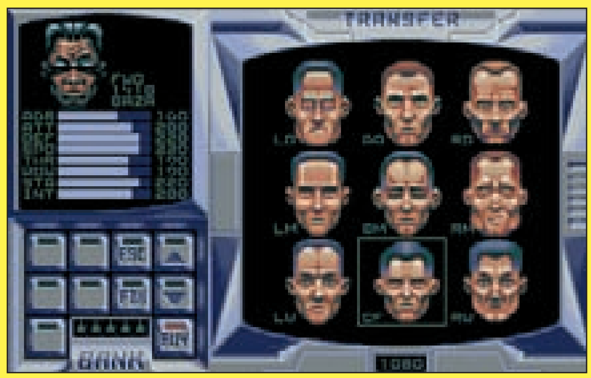
Publisher: Ocean
Year: 1990

While flight simulators were commonplace on the ST and Amiga, *F-29 Retaliator* was one of the better examples and is well worth including here. Featuring gripping gameplay, absorbing missions and some wonderfully smooth visuals, *Retaliator* offered gamers a breathtaking chance to play Top Gun for a day.

Speedball 2

Publisher: Renegade
Year: 1990

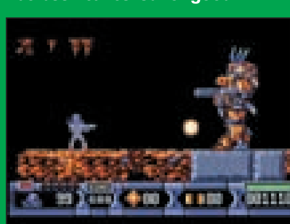
You can't make a list of great 16-bit computer games without including the Bitmap Brothers somewhere, so here's the excellent *Speedball 2* yet again. Great futuristic visuals, gripping gameplay and some of the most intense action ever seen in a game all combine to make an essential title.



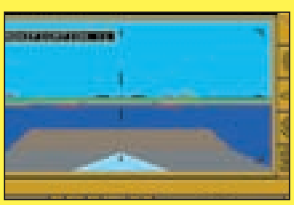
Turrican II

Publisher: Rainbow Arts
Year: 1991

A superb follow-up to the excellent *Turrican*, this sequel had it all. The great visuals, storming soundtrack and frenzied gameplay were in perfect synergy with the eye-popping weaponry and fantastic level design. Unfortunately, it now looks like the expected remake by Factor 5 has been cancelled for good.



Carrier Command



Publisher: Rainbird
Year: 1988

Carrier Command's unique blend of strategy, action and simulation ensured that it's rightly remembered as an all-time classic. While a nasty bug plagued early versions of the game, the ability to pilot various aircraft and even the occasional amphibious craft put *Carrier Command* in a league of its own.

Stunt Car Racer

Publisher: Microprose
Year: 1989

Geoff Crammond's name may be synonymous with PC Grand Prix games now, but *Stunt Car Racer* is still one of his finest hours. Featuring superb wire-frame graphics and some great physics, *Stunt Car Racer* saw you tearing around rollercoaster-style tracks at ridiculous speeds – fall off the track and you'd be winched back on, but only until your car fell apart… Still as playable now as it ever was.







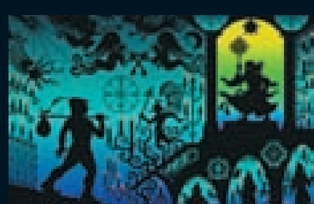
T·H·E F·O·O·L·S E·R·R·A·N·D

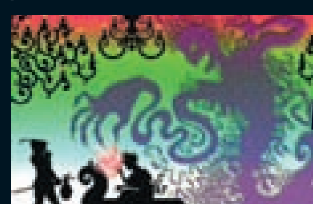
A RIDDLE WRAPPED IN A MYSTERY INSIDE AN ENIGMA – THEY SURE DON'T MAKE PUZZLE GAMES LIKE THEY USED TO

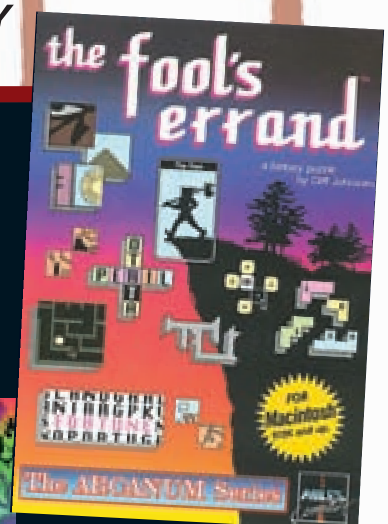
Format: **Macintosh (first), PC, Amiga, Atari ST**
Release: **1987 (Mac), 1989 (PC), 1990 (Amiga/Atari ST)**
Publisher: **Miles Computing**
Developer: **Cliff Johnson (Mac), Manley Associates (conversions)**

Fools Never Learn

If you've never had your brain scrambled by *The Fool's Errand*, then now is the perfect time to do so – mainly because the sequel (available to pre-order from fools-errand.com) is due out in July 2005. *The Fool And His Money* promises even more addictive puzzle play than its predecessor, but in this graphic-hungry age can it really do well enough to consider itself a success? "People play my games for my authorship and imagination," says Johnson, "the tall tale, the unique art direction, and enough 'ah-ha!' to keep 'em grinning ear-to-ear. Like *Field Of Dreams*, I trust that if I build it, they will come."







▲ If you thought *The Fool's Errand* was tricky, wait until your try *The Fool And His Money*.

Despite puzzle games playing a key part in the evolution of videogames, very few of them become revered by nearly everyone who plays them. But if you were to look up *The Fool's Errand* on any internet search engine, you'd find words like 'classic', 'timeless' and 'enchanting' coming up over and over, and if you've ever played the game, you'll agree that it's no coincidence.

Originally conceived as a counterpoint to *Masquerade* – the 1979 treasure-hunt book of puzzles whose answers revealed the location of a £30,000 golden hare buried somewhere in the UK – *The Fool's Errand* evolved from a simple pen-and-paper puzzle into a game of mind-bending proportions. It was, in fact, the first videogame metapuzzle: a collection of puzzles that, when solved, gave a piece of the master puzzle. But that makes it sound simpler than it really was…

With only a blank grid, a handful of map segments and a selection of puzzles to get you started, the sense of security offered by the game's opening was deceptive – the more puzzles you solved, the more complicated things became. Each puzzle was linked to a chapter of the story (telling of the Fool's quest) and also to a piece of the game map. As most of the puzzles, chapters and map pieces were missing, you had to crack the ones available to reveal more.

This then created the problem of having to piece together the story and placing the map pieces in the right positions on the grid; not easy, considering there was only one way to match them up. Even if you did manage to complete all 81 puzzles, it wasn't over; you still had to tackle the final 'mother of all puzzles' consisting of 14 even tougher puzzles.

To call the game obscenely addictive would be an understatement – especially since people often approach its creator, Cliff Johnson, to tell him how much they hate him for his contribution to failed exams, missed work and even ruined honeymoons. Nevertheless, it's a game that deserves its place in history simply because it still has as much appeal now as it did in 1987.

"Because *The Fool's Errand* was a puzzle for its own sake," says Johnson, "I was free to create a straightforward, no-red-herrings, unambiguous picture-and-puzzle adventure. It was easy to get it published, but it languished on the shelf until *MacUser* magazine praised it eight months later. Then all the other magazines reviewed it, the game was translated to MS-DOS, Electronic Arts took over the distribution, and I could finally pay off the $50,000 in credit card debt that I spent to create it."

Of course, the best thing about *The Fool's Errand* is that it's still available. Visit the official website (www.fools-errand.com) and you can download it free of charge. For the hours of fun it will provide, we'd call that a bargain.

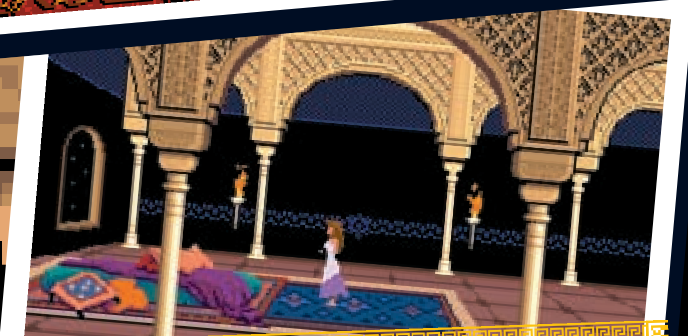


SAMURAI SHODOWN (Arcade) SNK, 1993 – Original Arcade Flyer

A PRINCE AM

IT'S ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR AND ENDURING VIDEOGAMES, SO WHAT'S THE SECRET OF THE PRINCE OF PERSIA?





Briskly rubbing your recently chained wrists and ankles, you gingerly step from your mouldy cell. Realising that the way ahead is clear, you race across the cold stone floor in an effort to escape imprisonment and save your princess from the clutches of an evil Vizier. So begins *Prince Of Persia*, arguably one of the greatest platformers of the late Eighties and still a classic 14 years on.

Like many early games, the majority of *Prince Of Persia* was mostly down to the efforts of one man, 25-year-old Jordan Mechner. Sure, his father composed the original music and his brother was the motion-capture actor for the Prince, but this was Mechner's labour of love and after four long years *Prince Of Persia* was finally finished.

After the success of *Karateka*, Mechner headed to California to



▲ Once the Vizier set the timer going you only had an hour to save the Princess. Against the clock!



▲ As you got nearer to the Princess, the guards you faced got harder to beat.

FROM TINY ACORNS

Although he had created many unpublished games, it wasn't until the release of *Karateka* that Jordan Mechner was thrust into the gaming limelight.

Set in feudal Japan, *Karateka* was a combat/adventure game that set a whole number of industry firsts including cut-scenes, large animated characters, scrolling backgrounds and wonderfully fluid, lifelike animation. It sold over 500,000 copies and took the games industry by storm. In fact, the only mundane thing about *Karateka* was the overly familiar plot that saw you rescuing the princess Mariko from the evil Akuma (no, not the *Street Fighter* boss, but an evil spirit).

Considering it only used two buttons, *Karateka*'s combat system was surprisingly complex – you were able to control the height of your kicks and punches and could also dodge or charge your opponents. Indeed, the only problem you'd encounter was the fact that you'd automatically default to your fighting stance; approach the Princess in this mode and she'd instantly kill you with one hit, which makes us wonder why we were rescuing her in the first place…





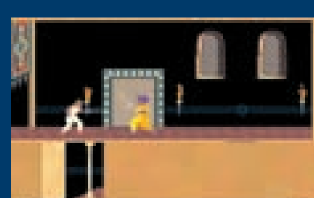
A STAR IS BORN

Even today, *Prince Of Persia* is an amazingly playable game – superb animation, fiendish puzzles and pixel-perfect jumps all combine to create a wonderful gaming experience. Thanks to the wonders of rotoscoping, the animation throughout the game was terrific – even the Spectrum and Game Boy received great conversions.

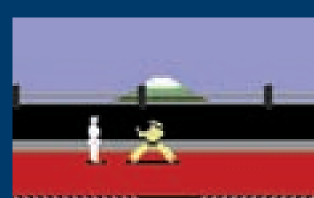
Escaping from the Vizier's dungeon was not an easy task and all manner of nasty traps and tricks stood between you and your Princess. Collapsing floors, pressure-sensitive portcullises and treacherous spikes were just a few of the many hazards you had to negotiate, and then of course there were the Vizier's guards.

Although the combat did not share the intricacy of *Karateka*'s, it was still of a very high standard and very enjoyable – trading blows with your opponents got quite hair-raising and created some tense moments. Being a platformer, *Prince Of Persia* had a fair share of precision jumping, but any frustration was immediately dissolved when the Prince gracefully leapt over a particularly tricky section.

With only an hour to complete the game (although it has been finished by two gamers in 17 minutes and 45 seconds), *Prince Of Persia* was not for the faint-hearted. But those that did persevere would discover a timeless classic that still influences games to this day.



▲ The swordfights with the Vizier's guards were some of the most nerve-racking sections of the game.



▲ *Karateka*'s combat mechanics were more detailed, but the Prince's animation was superior.

ONGST GAMES





start work on his next title. Having used feudal Japan for his first game's setting he decided on something just as exotic; being a huge fan of the *Arabian Nights*, Persia became the perfect choice. When Mechner's new game was released in 1989 it earned instant acclaim from critics and public alike and received numerous awards (including the Generation 4/Canal+ Game of the Decade award in 1997). Although it first appeared on the Apple II, it was eventually converted to a whole slew of consoles and computers including the Amiga, Mega Drive, PC Engine, SAM Coupé and many, many more.

Prince Of Persia's other claim to fame is the number of groundbreaking features it contains that revolutionised the gaming scene, including the incredibly realistic use of rotoscoping, a solid story to drive the game forward and the introduction of the all-important health bar. In fact, if it wasn't for *Prince Of Persia*, it's highly likely that *Tomb Raider* and other arcade adventures would never have been created. With the massive success of *Prince Of Persia*, it was inevitable that there would be a sequel. *Prince Of Persia 2: The Shadow And The Flame* appeared in 1993 and greatly expanded upon the Prince's initial adventure – instead of being confined to the dank dungeon of the original, you were now able to explore ships, rooftops and all manner of far-flung locations.

Although it was once again critically acclaimed, it never achieved the same success as the original game. However, the only truly dark cloud over the *Prince Of Persia* legacy is the horrendous 3D version that appeared in 1999. The transition into the third dimension totally destroyed the precision gaming that made the original such a joy to play. Fortunately, however, Ubisoft's *Sands Of Time* and *Warrior Within* updates have rejuvenated one of the greatest games of all time.

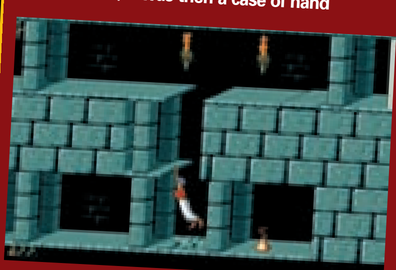


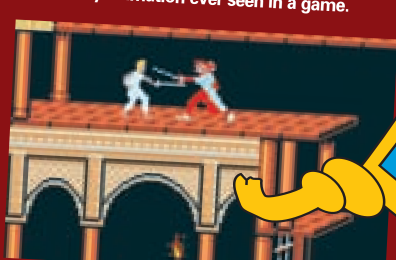


"IT'S ALL IN THE REFLEXES"

Before the likes of motion capture, rotoscoping was the best method of making computer-based (or animated) characters move as realistically as possible. To create the amazingly agile Prince, Jordan Mechner initially used a video camera to film his brother running, rolling and performing various leaps and slides. Once everything had been filmed, it was then a case of hand tracing every movie frame and transferring it to his Apple II.

After everything was stored in the computer, Mechner began the arduous task of copying the frames into the image of the Prince and his assailants. Even though he had not been professionally trained as an animator or artist, Mechner was able to create the most revolutionary animation ever seen in a game.





▲ Jordan Mechner's painstaking methods of animation certainly paid off. The Prince's movements were fluid and responsive – even the Game Boy version (right) was a shining example of how to use a machine's capabilities to the fullest.

WHY I LOVED PRINCE OF PERSIA

Although I had played *Prince Of Persia* on many other systems (including the shockingly impressive Amstrad CPC 464 version), it wasn't until playing the game on the SNES that I truly fell in love with it.

For starters, it looked like nothing else around – my friends and I would often watch entranced as the nimble prince ran through his entire repertoire of moves, all the while gobsmacked by how good a game could look.

Graphics weren't everything however, and fortunately *Prince Of Persia* also boasted some fantastic gameplay and thought-provoking puzzles. Even today I regularly go back to *Prince Of Persia* and I urge anybody else with access to this delightful game to do the same.

DARRAN JONES

THE BITMAP

Retro

GREAT SHOOTER? CHECK. BEST FUTURISTIC SPORTS GAME EVER? CHECK. HIGHLY RESPECTED PLATFORM AND ADVENTURE GAMES? DOUBLE CHECK. THE BITMAP BROTHERS MADE SOME TOP QUALITY TITLES, SO GAMES™ GOT IN TOUCH WITH THEM TO SEE WHERE IT ALL WENT RIGHT…

RETRO MICRO GAMES ACTION Company lookback

It's pretty rare that a developer excels in producing products of a consistent quality across multiple genres, but The Bitmap Brothers is a name synonymous with some of the best gaming moments of the 8- and 16-bit era. After its formation in 1987, the firm went on to release two important games the year after in the form of *Speedball* and *Xenon* (the first Amiga game to enter the UK multiformat Top 40, fact fans). While these were superb, the best was still to come and in the two years that followed the titles were followed up with impressively superior sequels – *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* and *Xenon 2: Megablast* are widely renowned as two of the finest games of the time and remain highly playable today.

As time went by, games like *Gods*, *Magic Pockets* and the triumphant *Chaos Engine* entertained many gamers across practically every format available, as well as picking up countless awards between them. The Bitmap Brothers continue to make their presence known in the industry today, releasing brand new titles as well as bringing ports of old classics to handhelds, pocket PCs and the like. To learn more about the men behind the legends, we caught up with Mike Montgomery, managing director of The Bitmap Brothers, to get his take on classic games, ice cream vendors and what the future has in store…



▲ By day, quiet, unassuming citizens. By night, creators of some of the greatest games of the 8- and 16-bit eras. Or something like that. These are the Bitmap Brothers (no relation).

THE BIG CHEESE

So who is Mike Montgomery? The man who now heads up the firm has worked on every Bitmap Brothers title since the beginning, with a history in programming before that. Starting off as a programming partner, today Montgomery runs the company, and having been with The Bitmap Brothers from the off, who better to reveal the secret of its success.

Q: HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE FIRM'S NAME?

A: Well, that was one of the hardest things. We went through a bunch of ideas and wanted something that would reflect what we were about. From the outset we were a collective, so we spent a lot of time thinking about how we would communicate this. Eventually one of us came up with the The Bitmap Brothers. At first we thought this sounded a bit crap, but after some time we decided we rather liked it.

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEING A DEVELOPER PIN-UP (IF YOU SEE WHAT WE MEAN)?

A: As developers we felt that publishers often took the limelight, which is strange if you think about it. After all, you buy music albums and singles for the artist not the record label they're published on. Our aim was to push the developer (in this case us) to the forefront. I think we succeeded.

AND THE WINNER IS…

THE BITMAP BROTHERS MUST HAVE QUITE A TROPHY CABINET

It's not just the public that went crazy for The Bitmap Brothers' games – here's just a sample of the recognition their catalogue has received.

1989

Generation 4 D'or – Best Shoot-'Em-Up (*Xenon 2*)
Golden Joystick Awards – 16-bit Game Of The Year (*Speedball*)
Golden Joystick Awards – 16-bit Programmer Of The Year
Indin – 16-bit Technical Achievement Sound/Music (*Xenon 2*)

1990

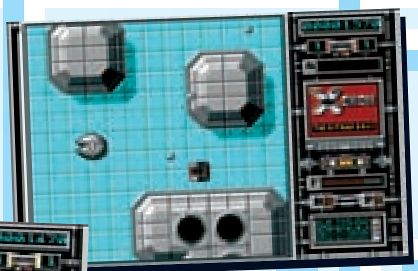
European Computer Leisure Awards – Best Shoot-'Em-Up (*Xenon 2*)
Fnac – Best Original Game (*Speedball 2*)
Fnac – Adventure Game Of The Year (*Cadaver*)
Indin – Arcade Game Of The Year (*Speedball 2*)

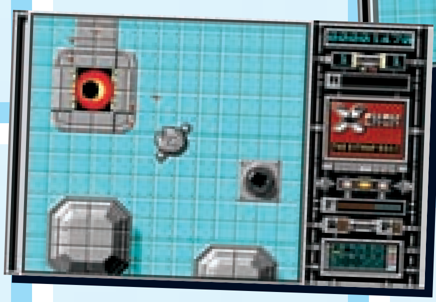
1991

Golden Joystick Awards – Best Soundtrack 16-bit (*Speedball 2*)
Indin – Budget Game Of The Year (*Xenon 2*)

1993

Power Play – Best Multiplayer Game (*Chaos Engine*)
Sega Third-Party Seal Of Quality Award – Product Of The Year (*Chaos Engine*)





▲ Not content with being a superb shooter, *Xenon* made a star appearance on *Get Fresh*. But while *Xenon* has passed in the popular lore of retro gaming, *Get Fresh* is, er, well, not talked about quite so much, put it that way.

BROTHERS

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE BITMAP BROTHERS GAMES?

A: In terms of development I would say *Cadaver* was one of my favourites – I really enjoyed working on that one. In terms of playing, I'd have to say *Steel Soldiers*, although I've got a soft spot for the original *Speedball* and *Xenon 2*. In addition to this, playing the original *Xenon* [the game was released under the Arcadia coin-op label] in the pub also gave me a real buzz.

Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE SEEING YOUR GAMES ON SATURDAY MORNING KIDS' TV SHOWS?

A: To be honest, when *Xenon* was on *Get Fresh* I was there in the studio as it was being filmed – consequently I never actually saw the game being played on TV. However, being in the studio and watching people enjoy the games was an incredible experience.

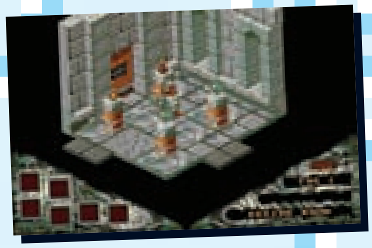
Q: IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF A BITMAP BROTHERS RETRO COMPILATION APPEARING ON CURRENT CONSOLES? WE'D PAY £20 FOR A PERFECT CONVERSION OF AMIGA SPEEDBALL 2…

A: We'd love to do something like that, but we need to find a publisher willing to do it [any publishers reading please take note – Ed]. It's a very nice idea but, as I say, we're a developer and not involved in the publishing side of things. Still, if someone came along with the right offer…

Q: DO YOU THINK THE LARGER PUBLISHING HOUSES ARE STUNTING CREATIVITY WITHIN THE GAMES INDUSTRY?

A: Naturally, I don't want to bite the hand that feeds me, but to an extent I'd agree with that argument. Indeed, it seems that there are one or two publishers who are in there all the time, taking all the money. With that said, licensed games have improved a lot in recent years. On the 16-bit platforms it seemed that publishers would acquire a licence and then push out any old rubbish. Sadly, people still went out and bought such products.

The industry needs something to help smaller developers and publishers to be more successful. We've got a bit more clout than some of the smaller developers out there, but often we can't get a green light on certain titles, which is a shame. I remember one time when we were showing a publisher a rough demo of a game that was founded on a really great idea. The guy we were talking with agreed that it was a good idea, but said his boss wasn't buying it. He then added that if the game had been an FPS the deal would have been a 'no brainer'. I always thought Psygnosis tried some leftfield stuff, but look what happened there.



▲ Beautiful to look at but tough as old boots. Was *Cadaver's* Castle Wulf a tribute to the classic *Knight Lore*?

Q: ASIDE FROM THE TITLES YOU'VE WORKED ON, WHICH OTHER GAMES DO YOU ADMIRE?

A: My favourite game of all time is *Dungeon Master* – it didn't rely on terribly flashy visuals and audio effects (although they did their job), it got by simply on great gameplay. I consider it to be one of the finest

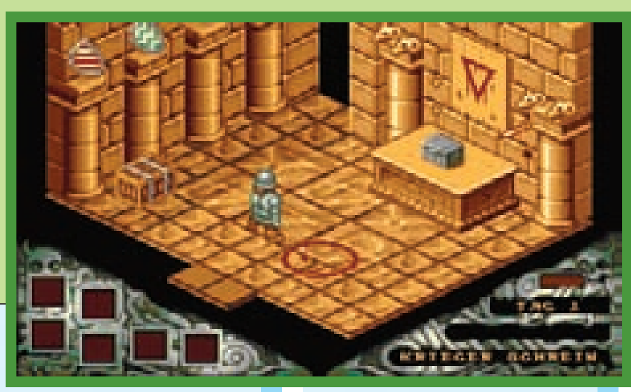
CADAVER

A strange (but interesting) change of pace from what you'd normally expect from the Bitmap Brothers. Rather than being a fast-paced action game, *Cadaver* was an in-depth isometric adventure featuring challenging puzzles and labyrinthine levels. As Karadoc the Dwarf, you had to infiltrate Castle Wulf in an attempt to defeat the dark magic of evil wizard Dianos and his fiendish traps while collecting as much gold for yourself as possible. Unsurprisingly, it was rather difficult, and to this day we still can't complete the damn thing. Despite not being overly popular, the game was received well enough to deserve an add-on disc – *Cadaver: The Payoff* – which offered an additional four levels to play through… and it was even tougher than the original.







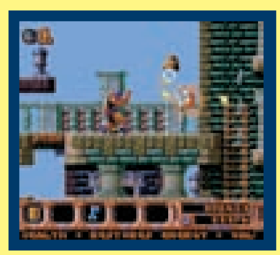


GODS





Strangely enough, the Bitmaps themselves claim that this was their finest hour, even though *Speedball 2* is more revered among the fans. Nevertheless, *Gods* was a damn fine game. You, as a Greek warrior, had to rid your city of demons and prove yourself immortal by solving puzzles and enjoying all manner of platform-style action. However, *Gods* wasn't your average platform game because finding all the bonuses and getting through each level in one piece actually required a modicum of thought rather than just aimless jumping. The biggest selling point was the AI coding – the better you did in the game, the tougher the enemies got. Just whyis *Gods* so overlooked? Criminal…



▲ *Gods* was a sort of thinking man's platformer, with plenty of leaping and hacking combined with some thought-provoking puzzles and problems.



▲ Not only did *The Chaos Engine* have the Bitmap's unique style, it also proved to be another tough challenge.

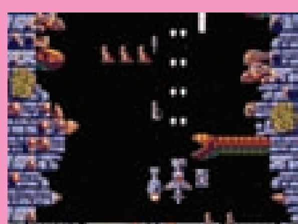
XENON 2: MEGABLAST



The Bitmap Brothers' release of August '99, was followed by the sound of multiple jaws hitting the proverbial floor. *Xenon 2: Megablast* had arrived, and in doing so, sent many an Amiga and ST owner into a rabid frenzy.

Incredibly slick to look at and featuring Bomb The Bass' excellent *Megablast* track, *Xenon 2* proved yet again that when it came to getting the best out of the 16-bit computers, the Bitmaps were kings. Light years ahead of the original in terms of both style and sound, *Megablast* took the vertical shooter to a whole new, gorgeously parallaxed, level. Blasting the beautifully rendered enemies resulted in bubbles being left in their wake. These needed to be collected and yielded money you could spend at the end of each level's weapon shop.

As to be expected, the weapons on offer were suitably impressive, with many of the more expensive ones packing an awesome amount of heat. The high-powered weaponry was a godsend, as later levels were heaving with all manner of weird and wonderful beasties. Add some hard as nails bosses and the end result was a wonderfully hectic experience. While converted to many consoles, *Megablast* never received the same critical acclaim bestowed on it by computer owners.



▲ Improving on the original in every possible way, *Xenon 2: Megablast* was the shooter to have if you were a 16-bit computer gamer. And those of you who began with 32 or 64 bits should consider trying this anyway. It's ace.



▲ Lots of weapons, masses of enemies and all to the strains of a fantastic soundtrack.

examples of videogame design I've ever encountered. *Thrust* was also a clever game and then of course there was *Oids* [by the same team that did *Dungeon Master*] – that was a fine title too. More recently, I've been impressed by *Project Eden*, *Ghost Recon* and *Giants* – the last of which I played to completion. Some very weird ideas knocking about there, but a good game all the same.

Q: WERE THE GAMES BETTER IN THE OLD DAYS.

A: It doesn't really matter when a title was released – a good game will always be a good game. I played *Dungeon Master* last year and it still holds up against today's software. I've got fond memories of many of the old classics, but the main thing is that you enjoy what you're playing.

Q: WHAT PROJECTS DID YOU WORK ON BEFORE CO-FOUNDING THE BITMAP BROTHERS?

A: I worked on *Monopoly* on the C64 – and, come to think of it, just about every home computer version of *Monopoly* available at the time. I also coded versions of *Scrabble* and *Cluedo* for the 8-bit systems. I also had a small role in the development of the Spectrum and C64 versions of *Dan Dare*. As for the 16-bit systems, I worked on *Amiga Karate* and *ST Karate* for a small publisher called Triangles.

Q: MANY OF THE BITMAP BROTHERS' GAMES HAD A UNIQUE METALLIC LOOK ABOUT THEM, HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT?

A: Well, I'm not an artist myself, this look was down to colleagues such as Dan Malone [*Speedball 2*] and Mark Coleman [*Speedball*] – it was just their style. Fortunately, it proved to be a very good one that suited our games perfectly.

Q: IN THE ORIGINAL* SPEEDBALL *THE PLAYER GOING DOWN THE PITCH ALMOST ALWAYS SEEM TO LOSE THE BATTLE FOR THE BALL WHEN IT WAS LAUNCHED – WAS THIS A BUG?

A: [Laughs] No comment. Okay, our random number routines weren't working as well as they might have been. It wasn't on purpose. I've heard that comment a lot so there must be something to it. However the concept of going down-screen generally puts you at a disadvantage in most games of this type, it just doesn't feel as natural as going up the screen. This little glitch was rectified for *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe*, however.

Q: WHY DID* XENON 2: MEGABLAST *NOT FEATURE GROUND-BASED STAGES LIKE THOSE IN THE ORIGINAL* XENON*?

A: I'm not really sure why we changed it, it just happened. *Xenon 2* was more a spacey kind of game, so I guess they just didn't suit the style.

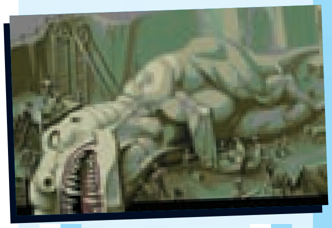
Q: WHEN YOU WERE WORKING ON* MAGIC POCKETS *DID YOU GET TO MEET BETTY BOO?

A: I can't remember meeting Betty Boo, but we met the Booettes [her backing group]. I can't remember much else about that one; I'm not going to say any more. I'll keep quiet.

Q: WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR "ICE CREAM! ICE CREAM!" IN* SPEEDBALL 2*?

A: Richard Joseph came up with the idea for that. He was experimenting

– you see, crowd noises alone are just boring. Anyway, he just put the "Ice cream!" thing in one day and as far as the rest of us were concerned it just worked – looking back it was a great touch. On the CD32 version we also added hot dogs ("Get your hot dogs here") and popcorn – I can't remember how the popcorn one went though.



▲ Contrary to popular belief, dinosaurs actually died out some time in the mid-19th Century as a result of industrialisation, as this picture shows (perhaps).

Q: WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH* SPEEDBALL ARENA *AT THE MOMENT? WILL WE SEE IT SOON?

A: It's kind of on the back burner whilst we work on our current project, *WWII Frontline Command*, but we're still tinkering away on it and have got some nice ideas kicking about. Watch this space for more details…

Q:* SPEEDBALL 2100*. ONE QUESTION: WHAT WENT WRONG?

A: What didn't you like about it? The thing is, we weren't trying to make *Speedball 3* and I think that's what a lot of people were expecting from the game. We basically wanted to just bring the whole *Speedball* experience to a generation of gamers who probably hadn't played the original games. People were expecting *Speedball 3* but we never meant to do it. I did a lot of the programming on it and the gameplay is the same as *Speedball 2*, so I'm not sure why certain people had a problem with it. Maybe it was down to the look, which I'll grant had changed a bit. In retrospect perhaps we should have put in a hidden port of Amiga *Speedball 2*. To be honest, though, of all the *Speedball* games *2100* is my favourite. In fact I don't enjoy *2* that much, I think when we did it I'd got too used to playing *Speedball*, which is another favourite of mine – but that's possibly because I spent so much time working and playing on it.

Q: ANY CHANCE OF BRINGING BACK THE ALIEN IN THE STORE FROM* XENON 2*? PERHAPS HE COULD HAVE HIS OWN GAME? DOES HE MAKE A CAMEO IN YOUR CURRENT TITLE – SOME KIND OF ALIEN INVASION DURING THE WAR, PERHAPS?

A: [Laughs] I can't remember his name, we're sure your readers will, although I doubt he'll be coming back soon. That said, you might well see another version of *Xenon* at some point. However, I have to say that the cheeky chap will not be making an appearance in our current title. In fact, shut up – that's a stupid idea.

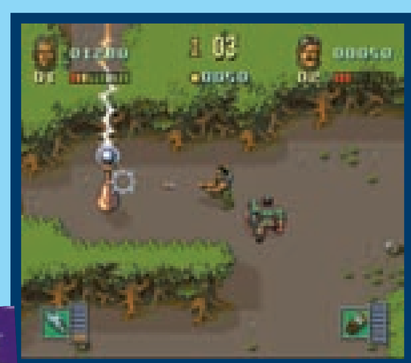
THE CHAOS ENGINE

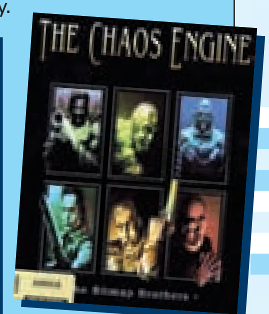




The Bitmap Brothers' eighth release was their seminal shooter, *The Chaos Engine*. It featured many of their trademarks – metallic, stylish visuals, absorbing gameplay and some rocking sound – and still remains a firm favourite with hard-core gamers. The basic premise saw you controlling one of six armed-to-the-teeth mercenaries in an attempt to destroy the titular Chaos Engine – a ridiculously powerful boss who claimed many a gamer's sanity.

What made the game stand out from its peers, however, was the inclusion of your ever-present companion. Controlled by either a mate or the computer, his additional firepower was greatly appreciated (and necessary, as *The Chaos Engine* was one tough cookie). With a superb selection of weaponry, each character possessing their own unique traits and 16 hellishly tricky levels, its success was assured. Converted to numerous consoles and computers in the mid-Nineties, and later receiving a rather subdued sequel, *The Chaos Engine* remains one of the most impressive examples of its genre to this day.





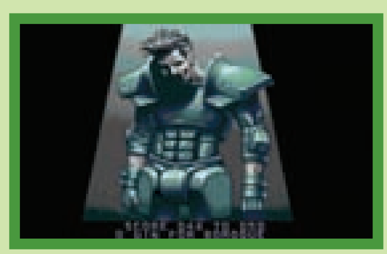
◀ If you didn't have any friends, the AI would look after your weapon-laden buddy.

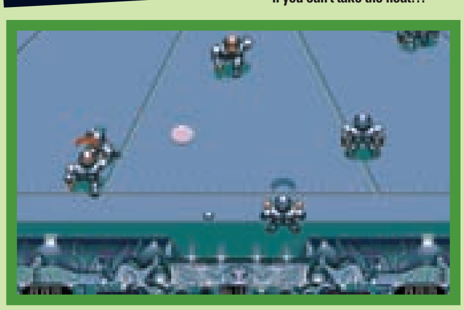
SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE

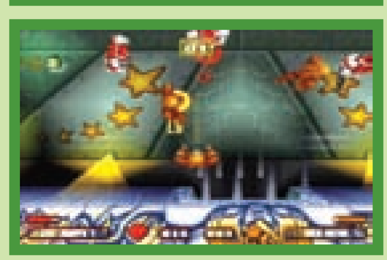
Okay, so we may have featured *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* in issue two, but how could we not include the one title that's arguably their best game ever? Once again, the Bitmap Brothers had taken one of their original games and improved on it beyond all measure. Responsible for the death of many a joystick, *Brutal Deluxe* had it all – savagely addictive gameplay, those familiar metallic graphics and a simply exceptional multiplayer mode. From the flawless points multiplier to the numerous injuries you could inflict on your opponents, the game was in a league of its own. Shamelessly copied over the years – Ubisoft's average *Deathrow* being the latest example – nothing has ever managed to capture the sheer frenetic pace found in *Deluxe*. Even the Bitmaps themselves failed to capture the game's elusive magic, when it returned with *Speedball 2100*.



▼ Often copied but never equalled, *Brutal Deluxe* upped the ante considerably over its predecessor and caused many a falling out between friends after one rough tackle too many. Still, if you can't take the heat…








1UP 0017
LIFE 017
2UP 0024
LIFE 021



Who you calling a freak, bub? **X-Men – Arcade [Konami] 1992**



MORTAL KOMBAT (Arcade) Midway, 1992 – Original Arcade Flyer

RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION

A NEW DIMENSION

Technology shifts can always be a difficult period and the arrival of the CD-based consoles (and subsequently 3D environments) proved a lot more difficult to market then many imagined – unless, of course, you happened to be Sony.

The likes of the 3DO and Philips CDi failed to do the business, while Sega's disastrous add-ons for the Mega Drive made its Saturn an unappealing prospect for the general public (sad really, as there were some great games available for it). Cost was also a factor and with the likes of Sega's new 32-bit console costing £400 (and that was before you'd even bought a game) customers were a lot more wary about what they were buying.

Although this was the generation that saw all the major players embrace the CD format, one company refused to play ball. When Nintendo eventually released its N64, it stuck to the tried and tested cartridge format that had served it so well in the past and as a result suffered none of the piracy problems that plagued the PlayStation and Saturn. Of course, sticking to cartridges meant some of the games were hideously expensive, but few machines can boast as many instant classics as the N64 did. With 2D gaming rapidly becoming stamped out in favour of 3D technology, the face of gaming was once again beginning to change.

32-bit and beyond





3DO INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYER

DESCRIBED BY ITS CREATOR AS "MORE STIMULATING TO THE HUMAN MIND THAN ANY NEW TECHNOLOGY SINCE PRINTING", THE 3DO LOOKED SET TO BE THE NEXT BIG THING. SO WHAT WENT WRONG?

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU: ARM60 32-bit RISC CPU
CPU Speed: 12.5Mhz
Memory: DRAM – 2MB
VRAM – 1MB
Resolution: 640x480
GPU: 2 x graphics animation co-processors
GPU Speed: 25Mhz
GPU Capabilities: 20,000 polygons per second
Texture mapping
Transparency
Sprite scaling effects (enlargement, rotation etc.)
Sound: Custom 16-bit digital signal processor (25Mhz)
32 channels
44.1Khz sampling rate
Input/Output Composite video, S-Video RF
Other: Double-speed CD-Rom drive
32KB battery back-up memory for game saves
Singular controller port
Audio CD & CD-G compatible
Photo-CD compatible

Launched in the US in October 1993, the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer looked set to be a sure-fire hit. The machine was the collaborative work of seven respectable electronics companies including Matsushita (aka Panasonic), and with EA founder William 'Trip' Hawkins at the helm, it seemed the system couldn't fail. However, it soon became clear that there were several major factors that would prevent the 3DO from ever achieving the sort of success of which it was theoretically capable.

The $700 (£442) price tag immediately deterred most potential buyers, irrespective of what games were on the machine and how many extra functions were available. Two further problems came in the form of Sega and Sony, which were both in the process of developing more powerful consoles for release a year later. This had a knock-on effect with regards to third-party software developers, many of whom steered clear of the 3DO in favour of the two forthcoming Japanese systems. Of course, you could hardly blame them for being cautious – the machine was launched at a time when developers around the world were struggling to stay afloat.

Despite facing such difficulties, the 3DO still played an important role in gaming history. Not only did it bridge the gap between the demise of 2D and the introduction of 3D, but it was also a fairly accurate indication of where the console industry would go in the future. Although it seemed misguided at the time, the creation of a multi-function entertainment system (that was not only compatible with games but also with audio, photo and video CDs) is like the consoles of today featuring DVD movie playback and network gaming.

"WHY I LOVE MY 3DO"

Selling my American SNES (with 40 classic games) in order to buy an imported 3DO seemed like a good idea at the time, but we all make mistakes. Disappointed as I was, though, spending Christmas day 1994 playing *The Need For Speed* and *Road Rash* is now a treasured memory that I'd be without had I not been such a mindless fool.

Keith Edwards

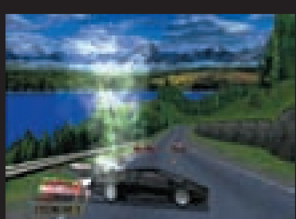
Six of the Best

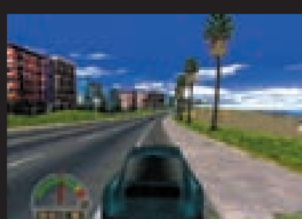
The machine may not have been the greatest success in the world, but it did have a few good games to its name

THE NEED FOR SPEED

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
Year: **1994**

Although additional 3D processing power has given racing games a boost in recent years, there are few titles that blend realism and fun as well as *The Need For Speed* did back in 1994. Competing against a single rival, the game wasn't particularly smooth or fast, but featured winding country roads, an astonishing draw distance and some of the most impressive car crashes seen in a videogame to date. Unfortunately, none of the follow-ups have been anywhere near as impressive.

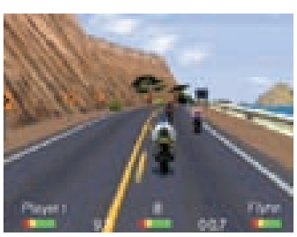


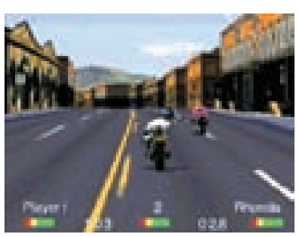


ROAD RASH

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
Year: **1994**

By using a mix of sprites and polygons, EA was able to keep 3DO *Road Rash* running fast and smoothly. Although the concept hadn't changed a great deal from the earlier Mega Drive games, this incarnation featured lengthier tracks as well as graphics that many described as 'photorealistic'. The game also featured licensed tracks by Soundgarden and Swervedriver, though hardware limitations meant that the machine couldn't play them during the races.





SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO

Publisher: **Capcom**
Year: **1994**

Looking far more authentic than the SNES incarnation of *Super Street Fighter II*, 3DO *SSFII Turbo* featured practically all the animation frames from the original arcade game. It also boasted Qsound and remixed music tracks that people seemed to love or hate in equal numbers. Sadly, a lack of processor power meant that many of the parallax layers had been removed from the scrolling backgrounds, giving the game a flatter look than the coin-op version.



▲ Well, it's better than the SNES conversion, but it *is* on the 3DO. Can't have everything, eh?

SAMURAI SHODOWN

Publisher: **BMG**
Year: **1994**

Like Capcom's *Super Street Fighter II Turbo*, 3DO *Samurai Shodown* looked closer to the original arcade game than any of the other console conversions. Unfortunately, the 3DO hardware wasn't well-suited to running complex 2D routines, and because all the scaling effects had been included along with all the animation the program didn't move things as smoothly as the Neo Geo version. Thankfully, these drawbacks didn't affect the gameplay to any great extent.



▲ For an apparently all-powerful machine, the 3DO struggled with some visual effects.

RETURN FIRE

Publisher: **3DO**
Year: **1994**

Based around a simple 'capture the flag' theme, *Return Fire* was one of the few 3DO games that helped the format to attract a wider audience. Played from a bird's-eye point of view, a range of vehicles were on offer, including tanks and helicopters, each bringing a slightly different flavour to the experience. Best of all, the game featured a sublime two-player split-screen battle mode, which instantly gave *Return Fire* a longevity far beyond that of most similar titles.



▲ You fancy capturing some flags? You'll be wanting a play of *Return Fire* then.

CRASH 'N BURN

Publisher: **Crystal Dynamics**
Year: **1994**

Comparable to *Wipeout* on the PlayStation, *Crash 'N Burn* was a high-speed futuristic racer for the 3DO. Developed by Crystal Dynamics, the game suffered from short, uninspired tracks and iffy controls, though the slickness of the graphics engine was more than enough to generate public interest. For a while, *Crash 'N Burn* was packaged with the 3DO in America and the revenue generated gave Crystal Dynamics part of the funding to create its *Legacy Of Kain* adventure series.



▲ This was a fairly impressive racer but the tracks were nothing special.

READY

Panasonic

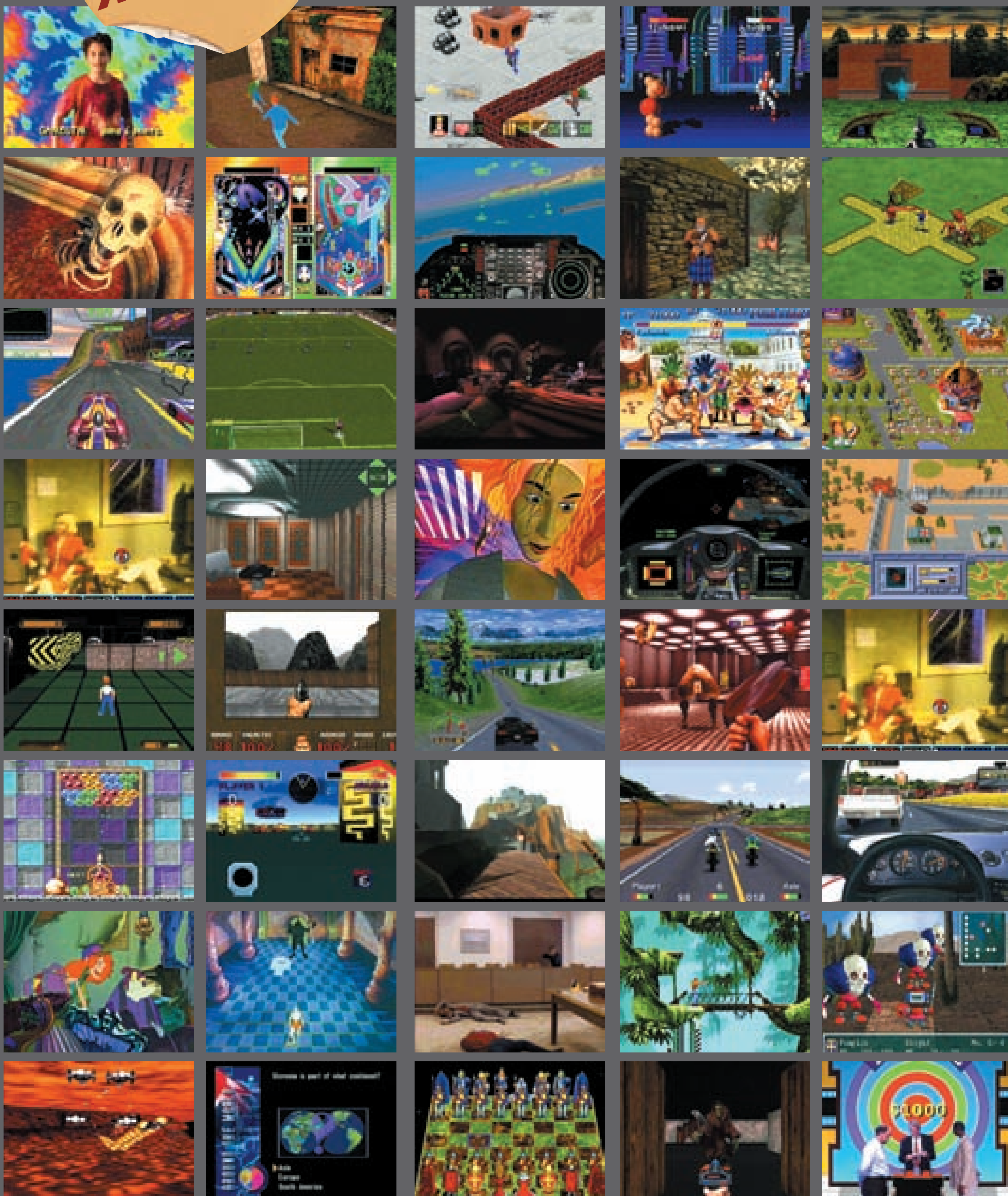
ACCESS

R·E·A·L

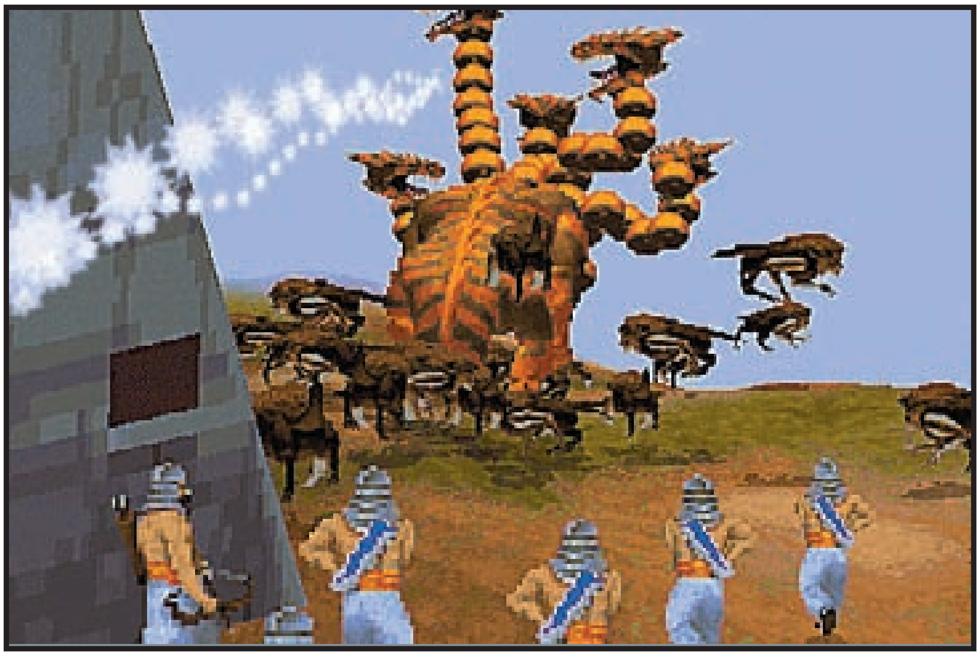
3DO INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYER



Classic Machine



GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT…



MAGIC CARPET

Take to the skies on a magical mystery tour

Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was quite unlike any other game when it was released in 1995. A world away from the likes of *Populous* and *Powermonger*, *Magic Carpet* saw you taking on the role of an apprentice wizard whose task was to restore balance to a shattered world. Taking control of the titular carpet, the game involved flying around an impressive 3D world and collecting globes of a substance called Mana from various sources, while guarding your castle and settlements. Mana could be found by exploring, but your best option was to earn it by attacking the monsters on each stage.

As to be expected of a Bullfrog title, your opponents' AI was of an extremely high level. Swarms of bees would doggedly pursue you, while immense fire-breathing dragons could send your carpet crashing into the ground. In all, there were 13 foes to battle and all required plenty of bombardment before succumbing to your persistant firepower.

As impressive as these beasts were, it was the rival wizards that would cause you the most trouble. Fast, dangerous and able to learn from your tactics, all of your skills were tested to their limits whenever an opposing sorcerer challenged you. Luckily, your standard Fireballs could be boosted by over 20 different spells. Some of the more impressive ones would deliver spectacular results that twisted and charred the landscape beyond recognition, and let you face your opponents on more even terms.

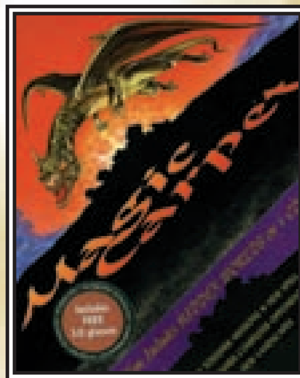
Earthquakes would cause the ground below you to crack and split, creating huge fissures, while rustling up a volcano would cause the ground to spew forth volcanic rocks. Every spell took place in real-time and was a sight to behold, but all this graphical destruction came at a price. Flinging around spells with gay abandon may have spectacularly rearranged the scenery, but it also seriously depleted your Mana source. Thus *Magic Carpet* became a subtle balancing act where you would have to carefully gauge how you would go about defeating each new set of dangerous foes.

This balancing act extended to your castle too, and although cautious gamers would stick close to their bases and deal with anything that approached, it simply allowed your rival's own fortress to build in power. Thus you would need to constantly defend and attack in equal measure.

Magic Carpet delivered stunning visuals and successfully married them with some captivating gameplay. The end result was groundbreaking and was enough to convince Sony and Sega to port the title to the Saturn and PSone. Imagine what an update could look like today…



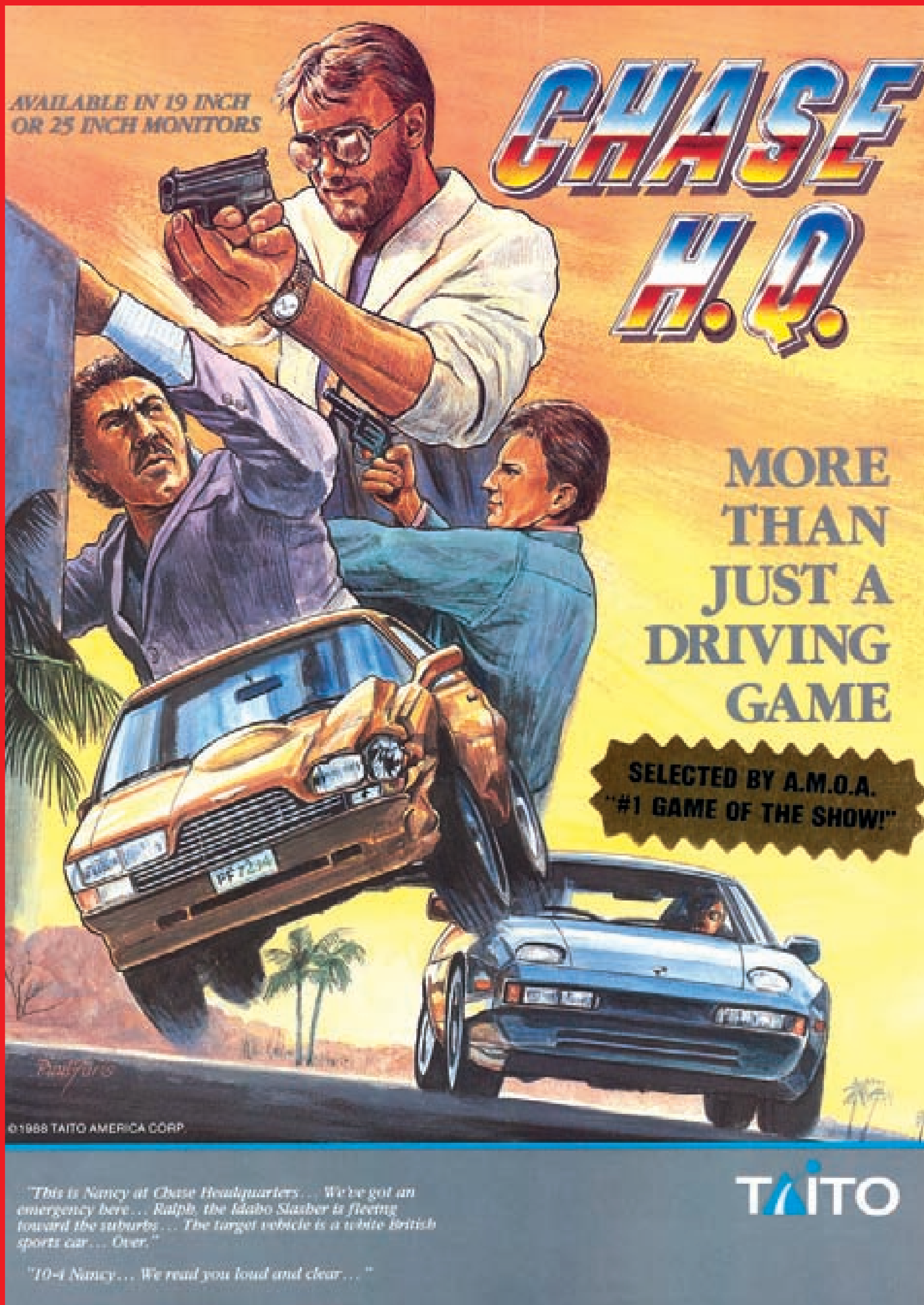
▼ The beautifully realised 3D world was home to a variety of strange creatures.



▼ You had to be sure to defend your property. 'Dragon attack' rarely fools insurance people.



Presentation	88%
Graphics	95%
Playability	93%
Longevity	94%
OVERALL	93%



CHASE HQ (Arcade) Taito, 1988 – Original Arcade Flyer

Classic Machine



CD-ROM TECHNOLOGY

The Saturn featured a double-speed CD drive, just like the PSone. However, Sega's machine was the more versatile of the two formats, even allowing users to play karaoke CD-Gs.

GREAT FOR FIGHTERS

Although the Saturn control pad wasn't anywhere near as neatly designed as Sony's, many hardcore gamers found the six-button layout perfect for playing Capcom's one-on-one beat-'em-ups. Thankfully, there were plenty of great arcade translations available.

NIGHTS IN WHITE SATURN

Prior to the Japanese launch of the Saturn, Sega released images of a stylish gold-coloured machine, though this was changed to a rather more drab grey by the time of release. In the UK this was replaced completely with black.

SEGA SATURN

ALTHOUGH SEGA HAS NEVER REALLY SHARED THE SAME LEVEL OF SUCCESS AS NINTENDO, ITS MEGA DRIVE DID WELL AROUND THE WORLD. WITH THE LIKES OF FIFA SOCCER, JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL AND DESERT STRIKE IT APPEALED TO THE SLIGHTLY OLDER GAMER. EVEN THE DESIGN AND COLOUR OF THE MACHINE SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT SEGA WAS CLUED-UP AS TO WHERE THE INDUSTRY WAS HEADING. SO WHAT WENT WRONG FOR THE SEGA SATURN?

As the 16-bit era drew to a close, Sega seemed to lose sight of where the games industry was going and attempted to remain at the cutting edge by releasing numerous pieces of ill-fated hardware. First came the Mega CD, which offered very little over the standard Mega Drive other than improved sound quality and horribly pixellated full motion video. Next up was the 32X, which bizarrely reverted to cartridges as a storage medium, while barely being more technologically advanced than the Sega Virtua Processor (SVP) which had been used to boost the Mega Drive conversion of *Virtua Racing*. Plus there were hardware combinations such as the MultiMega, which included both Mega Drive and Mega CD technology.

Of course, this was a difficult period for the entire games industry – Panasonic's 3DO Interactive Multiplayer and Atari's Jaguar were already failing to excite gamers, while Nintendo was merely treading water with the SNES. It was during this time that the transition from 2D sprites to 3D polygons was taking place.

It seems strange, then, that when Sega started working on the Saturn technology (which was reportedly during 1992), it was initially designing a piece of kit capable of producing the most advanced 2D graphics ever. However, in 1993 Sony announced that it would be entering the console hardware market a year later, and upon seeing the PlayStation's impressive polygon-pushing capabilities, Sega was forced to rethink its plans. Over the next year, Sega would hurriedly add a multitude of extra chips to bring the Saturn's 3D specification up to scratch. Well, almost.

The Saturn eventually launched in Japan on 24 November 1994 for ¥44,800 (£225), and thanks to a conversion of Sega's popular *Virtua Fighter* arcade game the entire first batch of 250,000 units was sold in just two days. Of course, Saturn *Virtua Fighter* was infamously awful, with far fewer polygons than the original version and some of the worst clipping in the history of 3D videogames. Even so, Japanese gamers didn't seem to care, and for the first few months of its life the Saturn continued to outsell the PlayStation, which launched with fighting game *Toh Shin Den* and a superb translation of Namco's

SPECIAL FEATURES

IS IT A CONSOLE? A KARAOKE MACHINE? A VIDEO CD PLAYER? ALL OF THE ABOVE, ACTUALLY…

While many great Saturn games are now fading into the mists of time, the special features the console itself had are all but forgotten already. As well as being compatible with Karaoke CD-Gs (a feature that was undoubtedly popular in Japan), a photo-CD operating system which allowed you to view digitally saved images and manipulate them with a selection of tools was also available. On top of that, Sega released an official MPEG Card that enabled video CD playback, though as you'd expect it was never particularly popular.

However, the most interesting Saturn peripheral came in the form of a Net Link adapter which plugged directly into the cartridge slot and gave Japanese and American gamers the opportunity to browse the web, send and receive email and even play certain games online. Featuring only a 28.8Kbps modem, the system was limited to say the least, but would be the foundation on which Dreamcast and its DreamArena online network would later be built.



◀ The Photo CD system let Saturn owners tinker with digital images on their console. Clever, that.

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU (Central Processing Unit): 2 x Hitachi SH2 32-bit RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computing) processors
CPU Speed: 28.6MHz
Additional CPU: Hitachi SH1 32-bit RISC processor
Additional CPU Speed: 20MHz

Memory: Main RAM (Random Access Memory): 2MB
VRAM (Video Random Access Memory): 1.54MB
Audio RAM: 540KB
CD-ROM Cache: 540KB

Resolution: 320x224, 640x224 or 704x480

GPU (Graphics Processing Unit): VDP1 (32-bit)

VDP1 Capabilities 500,000 Flat Shaded Polygons Per Second
200,000 Texture Mapped Polygons Per Second
Texture Mapping
Gouraud Shading
Virtually Unlimited Number Of Sprites
Sprite Scaling Effects (Enlargement, Rotation etc.)

Additional GPU: VDP2 (32-bit)

VDP2 Capabilities Five Simultaneous Scrolling Backgrounds
Two Simultaneous Rotating Playfields

Sound: Yamaha 24-bit Digital Signal Processor (22.6MHz)
Motorola 68EC000 Sound Processor (11.3MHz)

32 PCM (Pulse Code Modulation) Channels
8 FM (Frequency Modulation) Channels
44.1KHz Sampling Rate

Storage: CD-ROM (2x)
Optional Video CD, Photo CD, EBook and Digital Karaoke
Optional 512KB Memory Cartridge For Game Saves

Input/Output: High-speed Serial Communications Port
Internal 32-bit Expansion Port
Internal Multi AV Port
Composite Video/Stereo
NTSC RF
S-Video
RGB
HDTV

ROUND THE BACK



Certain models could have switches fitted, allowing them to play imported games at 50 or 60Hz.

The multi-out was hardly used here in the UK. In Japan, however, it was used for link-up games.

Similar to a S-VHS socket, the Saturn's main video output port would wear out rather too quickly.

Like the PSone, the Saturn featured a regular power input socket, just like a radio and suchlike.

"WHY I LOVE THE SEGA SATURN"

As an alternative to Sony's monster, the Saturn didn't seem to offer much, but those willing to delve a little deeper found a huge library of overlooked classics that appealed to those looking for something different. When everybody else was fighting for a copy of *Tomb Raider II*, Saturn gamers were tackling the last boss of some frantic shooter or plugging in a 4Mb cartridge and playing *Street Fighter Zero 2* in near-perfect form. Although in its twilight years the Saturn became little more than a vehicle for hentai games, its delicious line-up of shooters, 2D fighters, hardware innovations and Sonic Team-developed classics keeps it up there with the Super Famicom.

Gary Adams

JAPANESE CONSOLE



▲ The Japanese Saturn was a rather drab grey, but it did have 'futuristic' blue buttons.

BRITISH CONSOLE



▲ In the UK, the Saturn was available in any colour as long as it was black, much like the Mega Drive.

Ridge Racer just over a week after the Saturn.

Sadly, things didn't go quite so well around the rest of the world. Priced at $399 (£240) – $100 more than the PlayStation – the Saturn was supposed to launch in America on 2 September 1995 – a day that Sega 'humorously' dubbed 'Saturnday'. However, a few lucky gamers were able to buy the machine four months early at E3, though just three games were available. The problem was that while *Virtua Fighter* was massive in Japan, it wasn't overly popular with gamers in other territories, and a combination of Sony's marketing, better-looking games and lower price meant that PlayStation instantly started running rings around the Saturn (ahem).

Things did get better as developers learned how to harness the Saturn's power, though. The machine was notoriously difficult to program for, but after plenty of hard work Sega and a few of its third-party developers found that it was possible to combine 2D and 3D visuals by using the twin processor set-up. Using this process, games such as *Virtua Fighter 2* looked far more impressive than their PlayStation equivalents, despite using fewer polygons.

Unfortunately for Sega, Sony gradually managed to build up its range of quality PlayStation titles until there was really no contest between the two formats. Even so, the Saturn continued to thrive in Japan until 1999, and for those gamers with consoles capable of playing imported games, some of the greatest 2D shoot-'em-ups and one-on-one beat-'em-ups ever created were up for grabs.

MEMORY EXPANSION

When the Saturn was first unveiled, many assumed that the cartridge slot on top of the machine would allow backwards compatibility with Mega Drive games – a factor which may have been significant in the battle against PlayStation if only there had been any truth in it.

In fact, this was merely an expansion port used to connect various upgrades, such as the official Sega Memory Cartridge. The console did have battery back-up for saving games, but the cartridge had room for many more game saves. However, it would soon be used for a different kind of memory upgrade.



While the Saturn was the undisputed king of 2D, the limited amount of internal memory meant that Capcom and SNK were having to remove animation frames from the latest one-on-one beat-'em-ups in order for them to load. Unhappy with the issue, both companies later developed and released additional RAM cartridges (first 1Mb and later 4Mb) that slotted straight into the top of the machine, allowing every frame to be included and loaded in a fraction of the time. Because of these RAM cartridges, games such as *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* and *Vampire Savior* were possible.



▶ Some Saturn titles, such as *Panzer Dragoon*, have lived on through the Dreamcast to appear on today's consoles.

SIX OF THE BEST

The Saturn was graced with some superb games – here are a choice few

SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1995**

Although Codemasters claims that *Colin McRae* was the first rally game, it almost certainly wouldn't have been anywhere near as good as it was without the influences it took from *Sega Rally Championship,* which was released in the arcades in 1995 and on the Saturn in 1996. With just four tracks it wasn't the longest game in the world, but its unique handling and superb graphics made this one of the Saturn's highlights, especially after the disastrous home conversion of *Daytona USA*.

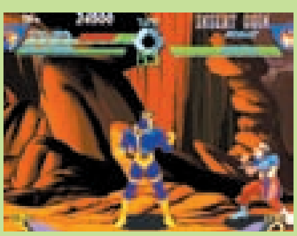




X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

Publisher: **Capcom**
Year: **1997**

Although Capcom once snubbed the Saturn in favour of the PSone, after insisting that *Resident Evil* wasn't possible on Sega's hardware (though *RE* did appear on the Saturn later), the company discovered that the format was perfect for converting its latest CPSII arcade games. Being the first Saturn game to make use of Capcom's 4Mb RAM cartridge, *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* impressed with its huge sprites and fast-paced two-on-two beat-'em-up action.





NIGHTS INTO DREAMS

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1996**

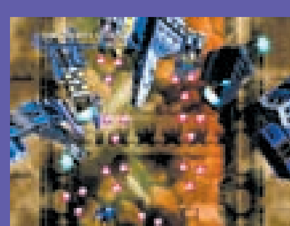
Sega fans were desperate for a new *Sonic* game, yet despite being constantly assured that one was in development – a 3D platformer in the vein of *Super Mario 64* – it never appeared. Instead Sonic Team released *NiGHTS* – a unique action game that revolved around collecting 20 Chips (blue orbs) and using them to destroy the Ideya Capture within the time limit. Through clever use of the Saturn's limited 3D capabilities, the developers were able to create a bizarre and colourful world with an atmosphere all of its own.



RADIANT SILVERGUN

Publisher: **Treasure**
Year: **1998**

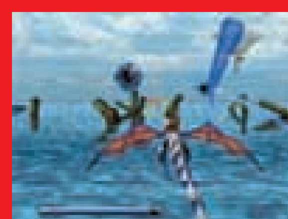
While decent third-party products were few and far between when it came to Europe, in Japan the Saturn had some of the greatest games around. Developed by Treasure, the quirky company behind *Gunstar Heroes* and *Mischief Makers*, *Radiant Silvergun* was one third-party title that really made the most of the Saturn's twin-processor set-up. Originally released as a coin-op on the STV arcade board, this classy up-screen shoot-'em-up featured a blend of 2D and 3D visuals that still looks great today.



PANZER DRAGOON

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1995**

Critics might argue that *Panzer Dragoon* was merely an update of the Sega arcade classic *Space Harrier* (with prettier graphics, of course). The truth of the matter is that they wouldn't be too far off the mark – with gameplay consisting of very little more than moving a cursor and shooting, the core structure of the game was certainly very simple. However, through clever use of art and design, and with some of the most tuneful orchestral compositions ever created for a videogame, *Panzer Dragoon* was quite unlike anything else.



VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1995**

Despite performing well in Japan, the Saturn conversion of the original *Virtua Fighter* was a disaster from a technical point of view. Even so, Sega was sure its 32-bit console was capable of far more and, after much research and development, discovered that the twin-processor architecture would allow for the limited number of polygons on offer to be integrated with scaling 2D backgrounds. Using this technique, AM2 was able to mimic the arcade version of *Virtua Fighter 4*, while processing just a fraction of the polygons.



Retro

SEGA SATURN



Classic Machine



A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH THE COMPUTER THAT STARTED IT ALL BY POPULARISING HOME GAMING



IT'S MADE OF RUBBER

The Spectrum's keyboard was made out of rubber, with a membrane underneath that struck the switches and registered a key press. With many code listings in magazines, and users learning how to program BASIC for the first time, keyboards took a real bashing. If you were particularly keen you'd have to replace the rubber membrane a few times.

Launched in April 1982 and coming in either a 16K or 48K model, the 8-bit Sinclair ZX Spectrum was the first foray into computing for many gamers. It was a friendly computer, with spongey rubber keys, a BASIC language that wasn't hard to learn and, best of all, it had hundreds of great games available at pocket money prices. This was the computer that invented the British software industry, with a little help from the Commodore 64. Companies like Ocean, Elite, Software Projects, Bugbyte and Ultimate were creating the equivalent of today's *Grand Theft Auto* and *Metal Gear Solid* but with prices starting at £1.99 (ranging to an extortionate £9.99 for the bigger games). Of course, piracy was also a problem then as it is now, with tape-to-tape recorders churning out copies for friends to swap in the playground, but then this home-grown production line also served to give the computer the popularity that it so richly deserved.

POKE ME, PLEASE!

Ahh, the POKE. By writing mini-programs in BASIC, typed in from magazines, players could give themselves infinite lives, health, ammo or fix bugs in the software by POKEing areas of the Spectrum's memory. This worked fine, as long as the listing in the magazine was printed without mistakes.

ZX Spectrum





VARIATIONS
[CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT] Spectrum+ (the same as a 48K Spectrum but with a different case), Spectrum 128K (more RAM for bigger games), Spectrum 128K +2 (with an added tape deck), Spectrum 128K +3 (the tape deck was replaced with a 3" disc drive).

"WHY I LOVE MY ZX SPECTRUM"

To me the Spectrum was more than just a machine for playing games, it was a way of life. Of course, I moved on to the Amiga and eventually the Mac, but I never forgot my first love.

I think that initially it was the cute factor – looks are always important and the Spectrum was a beautiful machine. Then there was the world of possibilities that was open to you. Programming your own games, writing letters on thermal paper, painting with a light pen and, of course, playing games. Personal favourites included *Back 2 Skool*, *Gunfright*, *Roller Coaster* and *Cybernoid*. Just think how great they'd look on a modern plasma screen…

Nick Roberts

Classic Machine



Processor	**Z80A 3.5Mhz**
Memory	**16Kb BASIC ROM, 48K RAM**
Graphics	**256x192 resolution, 8 colours**
Size	**232x144x33mm**
Weight	**552g**

ALL THIS FOR ONLY £175!



SPECIFICATIONS

Sir Clive Sinclair really packed the technology into the Spectrum. It had everything that the bulkier Commodore computers had, but in a small, neat package. The computer was based around the Z80 chip which meant a 256x192 pixel screen and two colours for each 8x8 pixel square (this gave rise to colour clash). A small memory capacity also meant the invention of the multi-load game and the immortal phrase "Press Play On Tape".



A simple 9VDC power adaptor was all that was needed to get your Spectrum powered up.

The expansion slot held infinite possibilities. Printers, micro drives, light pens, 32K RAM packs… they were all connected here.

Loading software meant shelling out for a tape recorder too – but any model would do.

Using the ear and mic sockets you could record and play data to and from your tapes.

The all-important TV socket. Many players grew up playing games in black and white.

ZX spectrum


© 1982 Sinclair Research Ltd
By Mike Singleton
Doomdark's Revenge
© Beyond Software

Classic Machine



Great RETRO Gaming Moments

C·O·N·K·E·R·S B·A·D F·U·R D·A·Y

Format: **Nintendo 64**
Release: **2001**
Publisher: **THQ**
Developer: **Rare**

We blame *South Park*. The crudely animated and just plain crude cartoon introduced a whole new level of potty-mouthed humour to the world. With frequent gags (and occasional gagging) concerning a wide range of bodily functions and messy deaths, the show struck a chord with scatologically minded viewers everywhere. Hell, it even featured a talking poo called Mr Hankey. So it was perhaps inevitable that game developers would try to tap into the popular formula. In 2001, Rare did just that with the release of *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, a formerly cutesy platform adventure that had been re-dressed with mature humour and plenty of bad language. With scenes inspired by *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Matrix*, *Conker* wasn't without its stand-out moments, though there was one section that gamers tend to remember above all the others – The Great Mighty Poo.





Coming from the same cack-encrusted school of acting as Mr Hankey, the Mighty Poo was a living, breathing pile of poo that lurked in a hollowed-out mountain of faeces. Poo had only his indigestible sweetcorn buddies to keep him company and, as you'd expect, he wasn't a happy bunny. Far from it, in fact: all this nasty piece of work wanted to do was be foul (smelling and acting) to any unsuspecting squirrels that happened upon him.

Amusingly, the entire scene (which involves you throwing toilet rolls into Poo's mouth until he's defeated) revolved around an operatic song sung by the scat-man himself. Thanks to Poo's booming voice and some of the most abrasive lyrics this side of Misteeq, this vile character's cameo is one great retro gaming moment that won't be forgotten in a long time.

SING WITH POO

I am The Great Mighty Poo,
And I'm going to throw my XXXXX at you,
A huge amount of XXXXX comes from my chocolate starfish,
How about some XXXXX you little XXXXX?

Do you really think you'll survive in here?
You don't seem to know which creek you're in!
Sweetcorn is the only thing that makes it through my rear,
How d'you think I keep this lovely grin?

Now I'm really getting rather mad,
You're like a niggly, tickly, XXXXX little tagnut.
When I've knocked you out with all my blab,
I'm going to take your head and ram it up my butt!

GREAT GAME BOSSES

GAME TENGOKU: THE GAME PARADISE

Format: Saturn
Release: 1997
Publisher: Jaleco
Developer: In-House



Fans of *Parodius* and *Twin Bee* will find themselves instantly at home with *Game Tengoku*, as it's one of the cutest shooters to ever appear on a home console. If you don't believe us, you only need to make your way to the second level, where you'll discover one of the cutest critters that ever tasted hot plasma.

Flying into an arcade grabber machine, you'll find yourself soaring over a landscape of stuffed toys, not to mention getting buffeted by various objects thrown by a mysterious assailant. Before long, a huge flying teddy appears on screen and attempts to send you to your maker. If that wasn't enough, a cute fairy armed with a giant laser beam joins him and the screen becomes a chaotic mess of bright colours and multiple bullets. Still, they're nothing a seasoned shmupper can't deal with and you'll soon be ready for the main showdown…

Making her way from beneath a mound of cuddly toys, you're greeted by your mysterious opponent, who has to be one of the cutest characters we've ever seen. A bizarre cross between a girl and a cat, this huge boss gaily laughs at you as she spins around and throws various items towards your tiny craft. Every now and then, she'll pause for a few moments and you'll need to shoot at the giant bell around her neck. After some frantic blasting, the green-haired beauty eventually sinks back into the pile of toys from whence she came, but not before displaying a big heart to show how much she loves you. Aww…

Rising Sun Retro

For many, the advent of 16-bit consoles opened up a world of import gaming. One incentive was the ability to get hold of games that would never appear outside Japan. The fact they never arrived on UK or US shores is a tragedy as millions of gamers missed out on titles like this – perhaps the greatest shoot-'em-up ever made

R•A•D•I•A•N•T S•I•L•V•E•R•G•U•N

Format: Saturn
Release: 1998
Publisher: ESP Software
Developer: Treasure

From its spectacular Mega Drive debut, *Guardian Heroes*, to the extreme, kinetic gunplay of *Alien Soldier*, you can guarantee that a Treasure game will be polished to perfection. For many, though, Treasure reached its pinnacle with its 1989 Saturn release *Radiant Silvergun*. Don't believe us? Read on.

For many hardcore gamers, the Saturn was a dream come true. It flopped in the west, but those who were willing to import discovered a slew of fantastic titles, including some of the best shoot-'em-ups any home console had ever seen. *Battle Garegga*, *Soukyugurentai* and *Hyper Duel* were just a few of the 51 shmups available, but every one bowed before the mighty *Silvergun*.

No stranger to getting hardware to perform above and beyond the call of duty, Treasure took Sega's machine and created one of the most astounding-looking titles that Saturn owners had ever seen. Putting to rest the claims that the Saturn couldn't handle 3D, *Radiant Silvergun* mixed gorgeous 2D sprites with a host of nifty hardware effects to create a truly mind-blowing experience. Fogging, transparency and scaling were just a few of the tricks that made *Silvergun* stand out, and such was Treasure's mastery of the Saturn it ensured slowdown was kept to a minimum.

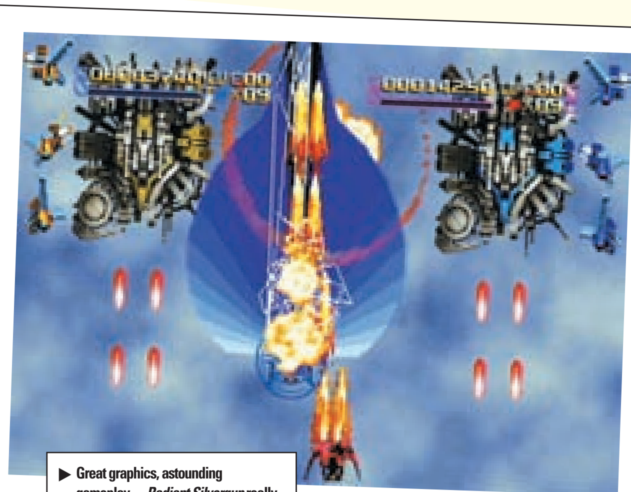
However, the true graphical mastery was saved for the game's many impressive bosses. From huge rotating monstrosities that spat great bursts of flame, to the pair of motherships that attacked you while speeding through some fiendishly twisting tunnels, every encounter was superb. Add some suitably rousing tunes and meaty sound effects and *Silvergun*'s captivating style was complete.

Of course, there was more to *Silvergun* than just fancy aesthetics and Treasure had included gripping gameplay elements to ensure gamers would find plenty to return to. *Radiant Silvergun* eschewed the traditional route of handing out power-ups and simply gave you seven impressive weapons (including a fantastic Radiant Sword) from the start. Treasure took things even further by allowing each weapon to be enhanced. The more points you scored with a weapon, the higher its experience would climb; get enough points and your firepower would increase to higher levels of destruction. Add to this the fact that shooting same-coloured enemies would garner plenty of bonus points and it was plain to see that there was more to *Silvergun* than met the eye.

Having access to all this high-powered weaponry might make the game sound easy, but that wasn't the case at all. Ridiculous amounts of bullets, some incredibly tough boss patterns and some intricately designed levels meant *Silvergun* was as tricky as it was gorgeous. Gamers couldn't get enough and a much-maligned genre (at least in the west) was revived in style.

NO THANKS, WE'RE WESTERN

With the advent of the third dimension, gamers became obsessed with 3D fighters and racers so it was perhaps understandable why *Radiant Silvergun* never received a western release. Although a few shooters did manage to reach US and UK shores, their impact was so small that publishers obviously felt that there was little or no market for them. As a result, many European gamers missed out on some absolute gems.

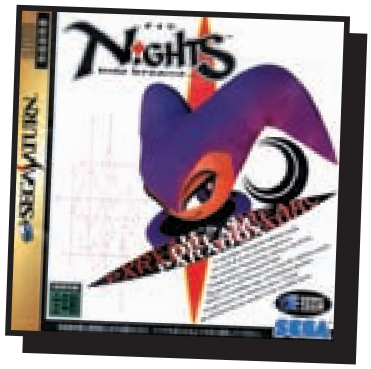


► Great graphics, astounding gameplay… *Radiant Silvergun* really does have it all. And then some.



Why Don't They Remake?

N·I·G·H·T·S I·N·T·O D·R·E·A·M·S



Format: **Saturn**
Release: **1996**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Sonic Team**



One title that we'd love to see remade is *NiGHTS Into Dreams*, Sonic Team's bizarre Saturn action adventure game. The game takes place in the surreal realm of Nightopia, in which the laws of physics don't apply. Playing as either Elliot or Claris (two human children who possess the spiritual essence of courage), your Ideyas (coloured orbs representing hope, purity, courage and so on) are taken by Nightmarians. Luckily, by entering the Ideya Palace it's possible to transform into Nights – jester-like creatures that can fly.

Once in this guise, your aim is simply to collect 20 blue chips from around the level then take them to the Ideya Capture to destroy it within the time limit. Confused? Despite the somewhat complex background story, *NiGHTS* is actually a lot of fun.

The problem with *NiGHTS*, of course, was that as a Sega Saturn game it was largely ignored by most of the western gaming community – a factor that almost certainly affected Sega's decision not to make a follow-up. Why spend time and money developing a game that could well be ignored twice? And yet a *NiGHTS* remake has been rumoured for ages now, though Sega won't confirm this.

Although the company has now merged with Sammy and had a complete restructure there's still been no news from Sega (although *NiGHTS* has turned up as a mini-game in the *Sega SuperStars* EyeToy game).With Sonic Team and United Game Artists now being part of the same development team, the possibilities it could come up with for a new game are mouth-watering. For the moment, though, we'll have to be content with playing the original.



SNOW LAUGHING MATTER

SONIC TEAM'S LIMITED EDITION CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

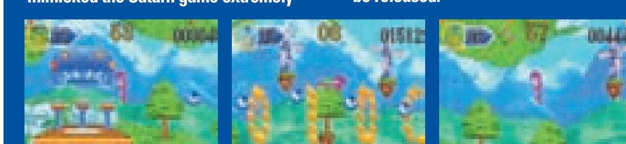
Although Sega has had to tighten its belt recently, there was a time when it would release all sorts of quirky merchandise for its Japanese fans. In November 1996, Sonic Team launched *Christmas NiGHTS* – a shorter, graphically rearranged version of the main game that rewarded players with bonus prizes for finishing it. As only a few discs were released, *Christmas NiGHTS* is now quite sought-after.



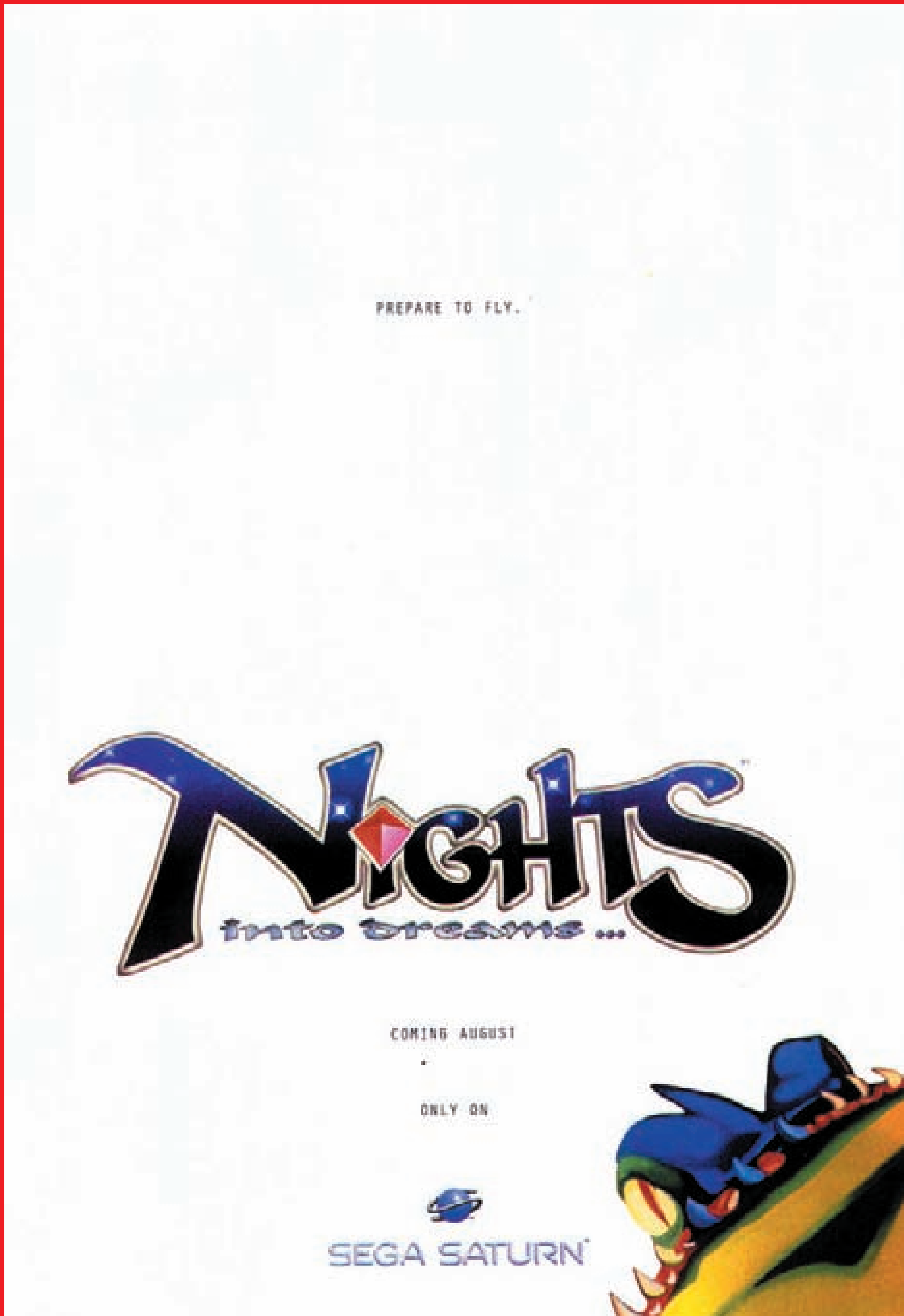
...next best thing

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE: EPISODE I & II

Although it wasn't a complete game, a Game Boy Advance version of *NiGHTS Into Dreams* was available to download from the GameCube version of *Phantasy Star Online*. Replacing all the polygons with sprites and 2D side-scrolling layers, GBA *NiGHTS* mimicked the Saturn game extremely closely, hinting that a handheld version of the game may have been in the pipeline. Sadly, although GC *Phantasy Star Online* launched in America almost two years ago, Sega still hasn't confirmed whether a full-length portable version of *NiGHTS* will ever be released.



▲ Even better than the real thing? Not quite, but we'd love to see a handheld version of *NiGHTS*.



NiGHTS INTO DREAMS (Saturn) Sega, 1996 – US Advertisement

PARAPPA THE RAPPER



1996 ■ PSone
■ With its memorable characters and catchy tunes, this may not have been the first rhythm action game (the mini-games in *Toejam & Earl II* were earlier), but it was the one that sparked interest in the genre. A follow-up came out on the PS2 in 2002, but didn't do too well.

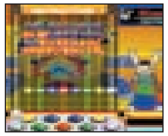
PERIPHERALS

FEET

OTHER GAMES

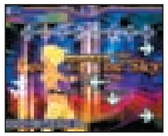
CREATE YOUR OWN

POP 'N MUSIC (SERIES)



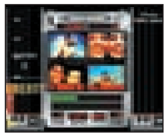
■ 1997
■ Arcade/Multi
■ Featuring a control pad with huge colour co-ordinated buttons, this had parallels with older arcade machines like *Mole Patrol*. *Pop 'N Music*'s simple concept has inspired a host of rhythm action games, including *Dance Dance Revolution*.

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION (SERIES)



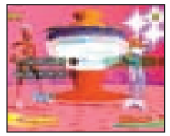
■ 1998
■ Arcade/Multi
■ *DDR* (aka *Dancing Stage*) has been a runaway success all around the world. Played by pressing floor buttons with your feet, Konami's popular series has influenced the development of other similar titles, such as *Jungle Book Groove Party*.

BEATMANIA (SERIES)



■ 1998
■ Arcade/Multi
■ Popular with DJ wannabes, *Beatmania* is played using a small keyboard and a plastic turntable. Like many other rhythm action games, the series features licensed music tracks, as well as some of Konami's own wonderful compositions.

BUST-A-GROOVE



■ 1998
■ Arcade/PSone
■ Development of *Bust-A-Groove* was almost certainly due to the success of *Parappa The Rapper* in 1996. With a more funky edge, the game features plenty of flares and afros, though its popularity has now been eclipsed by the likes of *DDR*.

MARIO PARTY (SERIES)



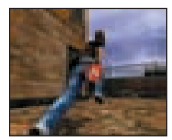
■ 1998 ■ N64
■ Each of the *Mario Party* games has featured a selection of mini-games, including some that revolve around rhythm and action. Similar titles, such as *Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega MicrogameS*, also include elements of rhythm action amongst a selection of other genres.

GUITAR FREAKS (SERIES)



■ 1999
■ Arcade/Multi
■ Continuing Konami's trend for including mammoth peripherals with its arcade rhythm action games, *Guitar Freaks* offers would-be rockers the chance to thrash some metal, even if they have no musical ability at all. This game is extremely popular in Japan.

SHENMUE



■ 1999 ■ DC/Xbox
■ Like *Mario Party*, the *Shenmue* games incorporate rhythm action elements (among many others). Entitled QTEs (Quick Time Events) a percentage of the fights and interactive cut-scenes require timed button presses as indicated by on-screen pointers.

VIB RIBBON



■ 1999 ■ PSone
■ Compatible with any music CD, *Vib Ribbon* converts beats and rhythms into simplistic interactive real-time landscapes. A novel idea, the system works well for the most part, but has a tendency to create impossible rhythms based upon vocal and harmony lines.

UM JAMMA LAMMY



■ 1999 ■ PSone
■ Developed by the creators of *Parappa The Rapper*, *Um Jamma Lammy* used an almost identical control system and interface. Musically, however, it was completely different, replacing the rap and hip hop with a selection of rock tracks.

SPACE CHANNEL 5



■ 1999 ■ Dreamcast
■ Following on from where *Bust-A-Groove* left off, Sega's *Space Channel 5* takes the player on a magical adventure around the galaxy. Styled with a wonderfully garish Seventies colour palette, the game stars a sassy central character, aptly named Ulala.

RHYTHM ACTION FAMILY TREE

Over the past six years, the rhythm action genre has become increasingly popular, with titles like *Dance Dance Revolution* (aka *Dancing Stage*) topping charts around the world. Of course, all videogames have always required a certain amount of rhythm and action from the player, and there were arcade machines such as *Mole Patrol* that asked you to do something a little more strenuous than just press buttons. Now, of course, high-quality music tracks can be combined with the action, and many games feature licensed tracks by well-known performers, adding to the genre's popularity.

PARA PARA PARADISE (SERIES)



2000 ■ Arcade/PS2 ■ Similar to *Dance Dance Revolution*, *Para Para Paradise* requires the player to use more than just their feet. Based on popular Japanese dance routines, the game features moves for upper body and probably influenced the development of Sony's Eye Toy.

DRUMMANIA (SERIES)



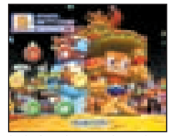
2000 ■ Arcade/PS2 ■ Seeing as it's the most primitive form of music, it's surprising that it took four years of rhythm action games before Konami released one featuring drums. Not the most innovative game in the family tree, *Drummania* revolves around hitting drum pads in time with music.

KEYBOARDMANIA (SERIES)



2000 ■ Arcade/PS2 ■ Like Drummania, *Keyboardmania* is merely another play on the *Beatmania* (or Bemani) theme. Popular in Japanese arcades, neither this nor *Drummania* has been as successful in the home due to the amount of space taken up by the huge peripherals.

SAMBA DE AMIGO



2000 ■ Arcade/DC ■ The release of this novel rhythm action game saw maracas being used in homes and arcades for the first time (for most gamers, anyway). Featuring upbeat Latin American music tracks and a frenzied monkey, the game is still popular, despite costing a fortune.

DOG OF BAY



2000 ■ PS2 ■ Not many gamers ever got to sample this strange little game, as it has never been released outside Japan. Featuring a gang of humanoid dogs, the game is heavily stylised and is also one of the first next-generation titles to use cel-shading on its characters.

LICENCES

FREQUENCY



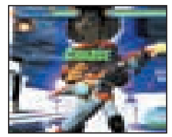
2001 ■ PS2 ■ Although, at first, *FreQuency* doesn't look like anything new, it doesn't take long to discover that it offers hardcore rhythm action fans something decent to get their teeth into. Breaking down licensed tracks, the player actually has to control all the instruments.

REZ



2001 ■ DC/PS2 ■ An unusual name for an unusual game, *Rez* takes the themes of life and evolution and works them into a bizarre cyber world where rhythm and timing is of the essence. Played in a similar way to *Panzer Dragoon*, firing weapons in time with the beat scores points.

GUITAROO MAN



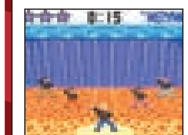
2001 ■ PS2 ■ Taking things back to the simplicity of *Parappa The Rapper*, *Guitaroo Man* features a bunch of Japanese characters and a simplistic story. Using just about every button on the PS2 control pad, this mimics guitar effects by cleverly using analogue control.

MAD MAESTRO



2001 ■ PS2 ■ Like *Guitaroo Man*, *Mad Maestro* utilises the PS2's analogue control, only this time to control the stylings of an orchestra. Not the most intuitive game in the world, this has still been popular enough to warrant two Japanese-only special editions.

*NSYNC GET TO THE SHOW



2001 ■ Game Boy Color ■ Featuring a huge selection of, er, four mini-games, **Nsync Get To The Show* has very little to do with the actual group, other than the picture on the box. Though this is hardly the best use of a licence, the final mission does feature *Nsync songs.

VOICE

ONLINE

DRUM MASTER



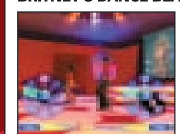
2002 ■ Arcade/PS2 ■ Not content to let Konami have all the fun, Namco's *Drum Master* (or *Taiko no Tatsujin* as it's called in Japan) has been growing in popularity recently. Not dissimilar to *Drummania*, the PS2 games are available on import and are highly recommended.

SHAKKA TO TAMBOURINE



2002 ■ Arcade/PSone ■ As the follow-up to *Samba De Amigo*, Sega's *Shakka To Tambourine* used an almost identical control mechanism but replaced the maracas with a tambourine. Released on PSone in 2002, the game has never been released outside Japan.

BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT



2002 ■ PS2/GBA ■ What with Justin Timberlake starring in **Nsync Get To The Show*, it wasn't really surprising when a game starring Britney Spears was released in 2002. Although decent enough, this didn't really offer anything particularly new or innovative.

KARAOKE REVOLUTION



2003 ■ PS2 ■ It was inevitable that someone would make a karaoke game at some point, so it was no great shock when Konami and Harmonix revealed *Karaoke Revolution*. Using the PS2 USB headset, the game tracks vocal patterns and grades the player accordingly.

AMPLITUDE



2003 ■ PS2 ■ Although this doesn't look hugely different from *FreQuency*, released in 2001, Harmonix's second attempt at the rhythm action game improves on the original in a number of ways, the most obvious being the inclusion of a four-player online network mode.

POP IDOL



2003 ■ PC/PS2 ■ Featuring a number of music-based mini-games, *Pop Idol* allows players to decide on the look of their character before going up in front of the judges. By plugging in a dance mat, players are able to dance their way to the top (or not, as the case may be).



Classic Machine

Nintendo®

Better late than never… The N64's release was constantly delayed, but we didn't mind waiting for a console this good. And the games weren't bad either

On 23 June 1996, the Nintendo 64 finally launched in Japan after numerous delays. The system was originally supposed to go on sale in 1995, though a lack of complete software had forced Nintendo to postpone the release date on several occasions. This was a difficult time for the company – Sony had launched the PlayStation in Japan back in December '94, and despite Nintendo's best efforts to keep public interest high, it was already clear that Sony was going to be a tough rival. The problem wasn't just the head start that the PlayStation had over the N64, but also how the two formats were being perceived by the development community. Not only did Sony's CD-based format offer game makers more creative freedom, but it came at a more affordable price. Nintendo had always charged developers excessive licensing fees for creating games on its systems, not

MORE IDEAS THAN THE INNOVATIONS CATALOGUE

Memory Expansion

Although the N64 was a decent enough machine, the image quality left a lot to be desired. The video output had a lot to do with this, but the lack of internal memory meant that most games could only be displayed in low resolution. Nintendo eventually got round the problem by introducing a memory expansion pak that slotted into the port on top of the machine. Unfortunately, few games ever used it, and those that did tended to suffer from major frame-rate issues.



Red and Yellow and Green and Blue

As well as designing a truly innovative control pad, complete with an analogue control stick, Nintendo also offered N64 owners a choice of four colours. Pretty as they were, having four different coloured pads also had a practical function. Even when all the wires were tangled together, it was always clear which controller was plugged into which port simply by looking at the front of the machine.

64DD Silicon Implant

Despite all the criticism of Nintendo's decision to continue using cartridges for the N64, the company still wasn't prepared to embrace CD technology. Even so, it was well aware that cartridges were becoming less feasible as a storage medium and started experimenting with alternative technology for possible use with the N64.

What it developed was a piece of equipment called the 64-megabyte Dynamic Drive, or 64DD for short. This connected with the N64 via the extension port underneath, and used writable magnetic discs that offered developers more memory to play with. Similar in style and size to Zip disks, these also allowed gamers to save data directly to the disc itself, making the device perfectly suited to art and design software packages.



"Why I love my N64"

Nintendo did a lot wrong with the N64, but I still have a place in my heart for it. Sure, it was a pig to develop for, but those who cracked it struck gold. *Mario, Pilotwings, WaveRace, Zelda, GoldenEye, F-Zero, Rogue Squadron, Jet Force Gemini*, the pad, the Rumble Pak… reasons enough to own the machine, and reasons why it'll always be one of my favourite consoles.

Chandra Nair





SPECIFICATIONS

CPU: Custom 64-bit MIPS R4300i-class RISC
CPU SPEED: 93.75MHz
CO-PROCESSOR: Custom 64-bit MIPS RISC 'Reality Immersion' RCP
CO-PROCESSOR SPEED: 62.5MHz
REALITY IMMERSION CHIP CAPABILITIES:
Built-in audio/video vector processor (RSP)
Built-in pixel drawing processor
Advanced texture-mapping
Tri-linear mip map interpolation
Perspective correction, anti-aliasing and blending transparency (up to 256 levels), gouraud shading
100 PCM sound channels
MEMORY: 4MB RAM, plus Rambus DRAM subsystem
RESOLUTION: 256x224 – 640x480
STORAGE: Cartridges: Format – 32-128 Megabits (256 possible with 4x64 meg ROMs)
INPUT/OUTPUT: Cartridge slot, four controller ports, extension port (located underneath), memory expansion port (located on the top), composite video/stereo, RF, S-Video, HDTV

to mention the high costs of manufacturing the cartridges.

Even so, the combination of *Mario 64* and *Pilotwings 64* was more than enough to convince 300,000 Japanese gamers that the N64 was worth buying, and the initial shipment sold out in the first day. Unfortunately, only a handful of decent games were released between the launch day and Christmas '96, hinting at a problem that would plague the N64. Despite a lack of software, the success of the Japanese launch was mirrored in America that September, with *Mario* and *Pilotwings* proving popular once again.

This time a shipment of 350,000 units was sold in just a few days, with additional game titles, including *Wave Race 64, Mario Kart 64* and *Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire*, helping to boost sales over the following months.

Sadly, the European launch the following March didn't go quite as smoothly. A lack of additional control pads and memory cards had gamers frantically searching in stores with very little success, while titles such as *FIFA 64* did little to reassure the industry that the Nintendo 'Seal Of Quality' was working. Thankfully, Acclaim's *Turok Dinosaur Hunter* helped to attract older gamers who perhaps weren't interested in the cartoon colourfulness of *Mario 64*.

Nintendo



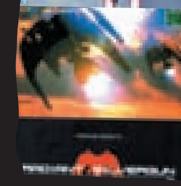
Classic Machine

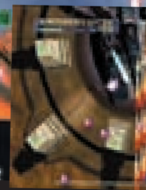


TREASURE HUNTER

SO YOU'RE A HARDCORE GAMER, EH? WELL, HAVE YOU GOT ANY OF THESE PRICEY LITTLE TITLES IN YOUR VIDEOGAME COLLECTION?









Remember how Biff got hold of the sports almanac in *Back To The Future II*, then went back in time and used it to make his fortune? Well, sometimes we wish we could go back in time and buy as many sought-after retro games as possible for next to nothing. You see, while most of the games we spent our hard-earned cash on are now worth about 10p, a few titles have become highly collectable and generate enormous amounts of interest (and money) whenever they appear on eBay, at car-boot sales or in second-hand shops. Of course, the tricky part is spotting potentially money-generating titles when they initially appear, then buying them before they vanish.

Although any title released is a potential money-spinner, you can be fairly sure that anything half decent that gets released in a limited quantity will at least hold its value. Just look at the release of *Steel Battalion* on Xbox – boxed copies were appearing at inflated prices on eBay from day one, especially as the product was discontinued after just one batch was manufactured.

Another time when collectable titles often appear is towards the end of a console's lifespan, when products are being produced in smaller numbers. Take the Dreamcast, for instance – titles such as *Street Fighter 3: Third Strike*, *Street Fighter Alpha 3*, *Shenmue 2* and *Rez* were only ever released in limited quantities, and although none are worth a fortune right now, the signs are certainly good for the future.

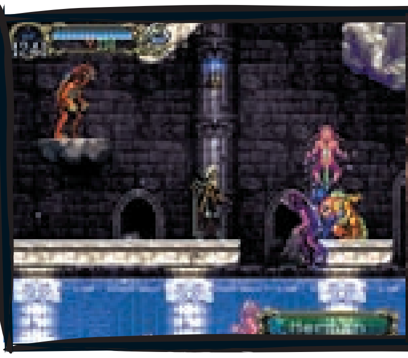
And lastly, there are titles that were only ever released abroad. A few great games, such as Treasure's *Radiant Silvergun* on the Saturn, for example, only ever made it out in Japan and subsequently became highly sought after by shoot-'em-up fans. It will be interesting to see if the Dreamcast version of *Ikaruga* (the follow-up to *Radiant Silvergun*) will be as popular with collectors in the future.

So if you're out and about and you spot an obscure retro game in your local charity shop, just remember, you could be looking at a nice little earner. With a bit of spit and polish, an item costing £1.50 could potentially be worth £150.

TITLE: METAL SLUG
FORMAT: NEO GEO
DEVELOPER: SNK
RELEASED: 1996
VERSION: ANY
ESTIMATED CURRENT VALUE: £1,500

In 1996 when *Metal Slug* was released, SNK was still trying to market its Neo-Geo CD machine around the world. Things weren't going so well due to the high costs of launching the system and the company was keeping a close eye on expenditures, which predictably affected distribution of its costly Neo-Geo AES home cartridges.

Seeing as how *Metal Slug* was a new title and it wasn't clear how well it would perform, only a limited number were ever manufactured for the AES system before production was halted. Of course, the series went on to be hugely popular and now the first game is amongst the most expensive retro titles out there at £1,500.





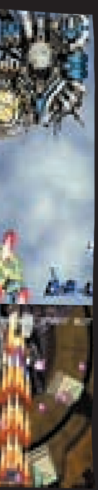
TITLE: CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
FORMAT: PSONE
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
RELEASED: 1997
VERSION: UK
ESTIMATED CURRENT VALUE: £60

Konami's *Castlevania* series has been running for more than 15 years now, and despite almost every instalment finding a healthy audience, only *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* has achieved cult status. Released on the PSone in 1997, the game remained true to its 2D roots and, as such, really only attracted a hardcore following.

Aware that the product was never going to appeal to the mass market, Konami released just a handful of copies, each packaged with a miniature art book and music CD. Even so, *Symphony Of The Night* didn't sell out right away, and for a while it was retailing at just £14.99. Now, however, you're lucky to find it for less than £60 (if it's complete with art book and music CD, that is).







TITLE: RADIANT SILVERGUN
FORMAT: SATURN
DEVELOPER: TREASURE
RELEASED: 1998
VERSION: JAP
ESTIMATED CURRENT VALUE: £150

Treasure is one Japanese developer that knows how to create collectable videogames. The company (which initially consisted mainly of ex-Konami employees) first shot into the limelight in 1993 when it released the classic Mega Drive arcade/action game *Gunstar Heroes*, before going on to develop a string of cult favourites.

Normally aimed at hardcore gamers, Treasure's titles are usually created for systems with a limited user base, and released in such small quantities that they immediately become highly sought-after. *Radiant Silvergun*, a great-looking 2.5D up-screen shoot-'em-up, is possibly the best example, now selling for around £150.

TITLE: CHRONO TRIGGER
FORMAT: SNES
DEVELOPER: SQUARESOFT
RELEASED: 1995
VERSION: US
ESTIMATED CURRENT VALUE: £80

Like so many of Squaresoft's Super Nintendo games, *Chrono Trigger* was released in Japan and America but never made it to Europe, giving UK RPG fans no choice but to import it from the States (or from Japan if they wanted to make things particularly difficult for themselves). Being such a specialist product, a limited number of copies were released in the US and fewer still made it to these shores, resulting in the game maintaining a high price. These days, most copies that are still in perfect condition have already been snatched up by collectors, though they do become available from time to time – if you're willing to pay around £80, of course.

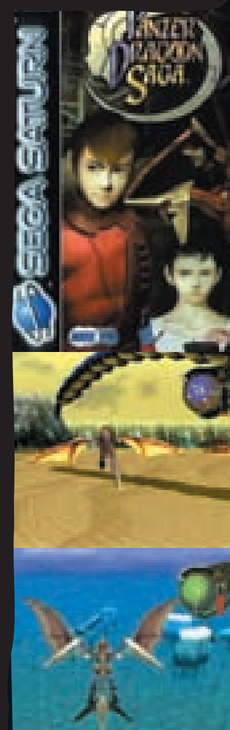




TITLE: PANZER DRAGOON SAGA
FORMAT: SATURN
DEVELOPER: SEGA TEAM ANDROMEDA
RELEASED: 1998
VERSION: UK
ESTIMATED CURRENT VALUE: £110

Being one of the last Sega Saturn games to be released in the UK, *Panzer Dragoon Saga* was pretty much ignored by all but the most ardent Sega fans (of which there weren't that many at the time). Coming on four discs, the title expanded on its predecessors by introducing turn-based battles, cities that could be explored on foot, and RPG-style level-ups, all linked together by a complex storyline.

Because of its unique design, the game received mostly positive reviews, but most of the few gamers who did get hold of it seemed underwhelmed. Within a month of going on sale, *PDS* could be bought second-hand for around £25 from most videogame stores; just a short while later it disappeared completely, only to re-emerge at almost three times its recommended retail price.





TITLE: SAMBA DE AMIGO (WITH MARACAS)
FORMAT: DREAMCAST
DEVELOPER: SEGA SONIC TEAM
RELEASED: 2000
VERSION: UK
ESTIMATED CURRENT VALUE: £180

With rhythm/action games becoming increasingly popular towards the end of 2000, Sega jumped on the bandwagon and released one of the most novel to date – *Samba De Amigo*. Comprising two bright red maracas and a plastic floor bar with built-in infra-red motion sensors, the technology included in the pack was certainly advanced for a home release, resulting in the game going on sale at £85.

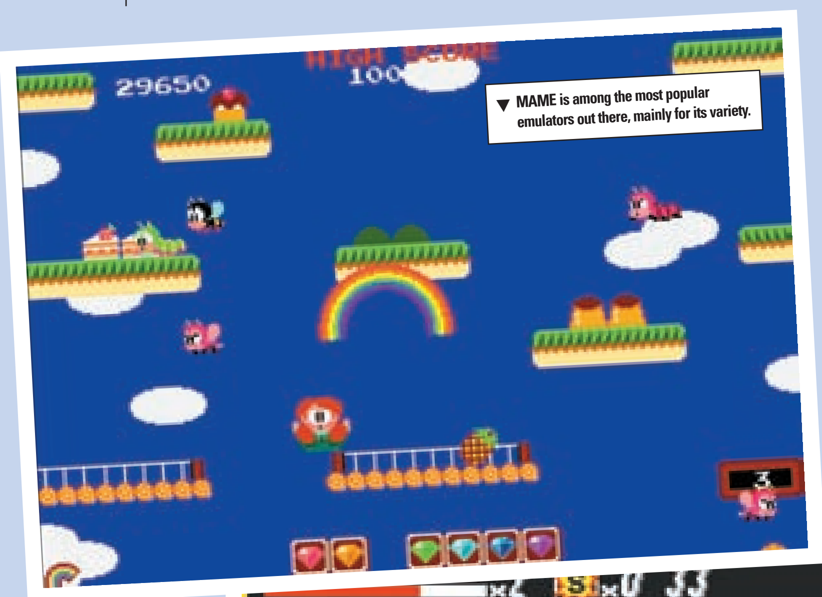
Of course, it's no big secret that Sega was in a financial hole at the time (as it continues to be, despite releasing quality titles all over the place) so it's amazing that the project was ever given the go ahead at all. Surprisingly, it was even granted an official release in Europe, and now sells second-hand for around £180.



Classic Feature

ROM SERVICE

Emulation is an unavoidable and controversial part of gaming just as MP3s are to the music industry. games™ looks into why so many people are teaching their new dogs old tricks – and if doing so could land them a holiday at Her Majesty's pleasure



▼ MAME is among the most popular emulators out there, mainly for its variety.



▼ As tempting as emulation may be, the keyboard interface is enough to put many gamers off, and understandably so.

COME ON – we've all thought about it, even if we haven't actually done it. Much like taping television shows, copying albums and being inebriated in a public house, using emulators is just one of those 'naughty' things that few gamers can claim to have avoided. But the question here isn't so much whether is emulation legal, but if it should be – at least in certain circumstances.

Unfortunately, with piracy on the increase, emulation is now being more stringently policed as new titles as well as retro games get copied and circulated on the internet. For the most part, emulation can be broken down into two main categories – nostalgia and collection. But what many forget as the download bar fills is that in the eyes of the law there's no difference between dredging up an obscure Japanese NES game and filling your hard drive with PSone ISO images. The likelihood of prosecution is as slim as with most other minor offences (authorities are primarily hunting those who profit from the resale of illegally downloaded software) but just because you've never been caught doesn't mean that you won't be.

As new technology evolves it can take some time for legislation to catch up. However, in the case of copying games (new or old) and either distributing or downloading them, the law is clear – it's illegal. Under UK, US and international law, infringing someone's copyright is an offence. The full details are explained in the 'Breaking The Law' boxout on page 176, but, in a nutshell, if you make or distribute ROMs you can be heavily fined – or worse. Last year, Sean Michael Breen – a hacker and leader of the Razor1911 piracy group – was jailed by a Californian court for over four years for copyright infringement and mail fraud. Admittedly, Breen had been hacking new titles and posting them on warez sites before their release, rather than copying retro titles, but the age of the game is immaterial in the eyes of the law. Thanks to copyright legislation, it will be at least another 60 years or





▼ No displays? Choppy frame rate? Maybe you're better off resurrecting your dusty old cartridge collection after all…

so before copyright lapses on even the earliest videogames.

Golden Oldies

It seems odd that a game that may be over 20 years old and no longer in the public eye shouldn't be made available to retro gamers, but, copyright notwithstanding, there are other reasons why emulation is frowned upon. The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) – the US organisation that represents game publishers – explains on its website why older games can't be emulated. "Copyrights and trademarks of games are corporate assets that are sometimes sold from one company to another – the recent sale of the Atari games library to Hasbro Interactive is an example of such a transaction," the website says. "But if these vintage titles are available far and wide, it undermines the value of this intellectual property and adversely affects the copyright owner."

This certainly seems to make sense, although it's unlikely that a few ROMs would significantly damage a company's sales. Midway recently released *Midway Arcade Treasures* for the Xbox and PS2. Containing over 20 classic titles like *Defender* and *Gauntlet*, it's the sort of title you may expect to sell badly as people can get these games for free on their PC. However, that hasn't been the case. "*Arcade Treasures* has been very successful and has not been greatly affected by downloads," says Mike Eglington, senior product manager at Midway. "We believe this is due to the fact that the £14.99 price has attracted a much wider audience for the game, that perhaps is not into using (or does not know how to use) emulation software."

The technical side of emulation can prove tricky for gamers who aren't up to speed with a PC. Not only do you have to know your ROMs from your ISOs, but you need to find the right emulator to run the games you want. And not only is it likely that the games you're after are illegal, the emulator you run them on could well be

EMULATORS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

The fundamentals of the emulation scene

BIOS

Stands for 'Basic Input/Output System' and is a file (or set of files) needed to use some emulators. Like ROM files, owning them is often illegal unless you own the console itself.

BLITTER

A dedicated chip used in the display of sprite-based visuals in certain pieces of hardware. Some emulators allow for various display options to be altered.

DUMPING

The process by which console games or chipsets are uploaded to your PC through specialist equipment.

EMULATOR

A computer program written to mimic another computer or console, copying its processor and system operations in order to run programs (primarily games, usually old ones).

FRAME SKIP

A process found in many emulators that removes a set number of animation frames to speed the emulation up to or beyond its proper speed at the expense of visual quality.

PATCHING

The act of applying a specially created file to a ROM in order to modify it in some way, usually by way of a translation or cheats.

ROM

A binary reproduction of a videogame cartridge, disc or board that can be run on a PC using specialist programs.

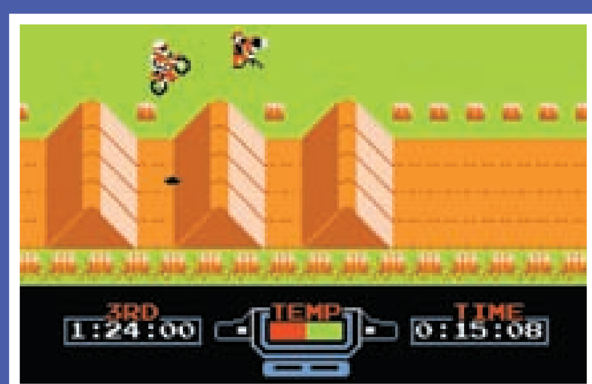
TRAINER

A small file patched onto the front end of a ROM that allows users to activate various cheats before starting up the game.

POCKET POWER

Consoles emulating consoles emulating consoles?

Emulators are tearing through the handheld market at a rate of knots. Game Park's GP32 is barely known for anything more than portable emulation (including old DOS games) and even the Game Boy Advance – among the most emulated hardware itself – has working 8-bit emulators. There are more adventurous programs on the way for the Nintendo handheld, one of which is a SNES emulator as well as a few more unique projects. One of these sees various true GBA ports being developed on a purely recreational basis. More impressive still is the rate at which mobile gaming is evolving to encompass emulation, and working MAME emulators are already running with some of the more primitive titles. As we're treated to more powerful handsets, the potential for this can only continue to grow.



BREAKING THE LAW

MAKING SOME SENSE OF THE COMPLEX LEGALITIES OF EMULATION

Digital entertainment might be a rapidly evolving field, but there are some long-established laws that govern the emulation of hardware and software. The most obvious legislation concerns copyright. In the US, copyright lies with the company that created the product for 95 years; in the UK copyright belongs to the creator for the duration of their life and for 70 years afterwards. The Berne Convention also protects the copyright of work produced in any of its 70-plus member countries – including Japan – which leaves very little software not covered.

Freeware is okay to use, as it is created specifically to be circulated freely. Abandonware, however, is not. Technically, there's no such thing. Generally classed as software that's over a few years old that's not being sold or actively 'supported', abandonware titles are still covered by copyright law. If its creator has officially released it into the public domain then fine, but otherwise it's illegal. Many sites, such as Home Of The Underdogs (www.the-underdogs.org), acknowledge this and will remove titles at the owners' request. Don't forget that in some cases the emulators themselves are also illegal. If they use third-party technology without permission then that's a breach of copyright.

Pretty much the only time you can copy software legitimately is to make a back-up disc for your own use, although even this is not always the case. Simon Halberstam, a lawyer specialising in internet and e-commerce law, says it's important to check the documentation that comes with any software. "The licence will dictate what copies can be made," he explains. "Generally speaking the law allows back-ups."

The punishment for emulation is usually a fine rather than a jail sentence, but it's probably best to play safe and not bother.





breaking the law too. While it's not a problem for different machines to do the same job (which is why several firms can make PCs that are ostensibly identical), it's a breach of copyright to use technology that's been invented specifically for one machine. Simon Halberstam is head of internet and e-commerce law at Sprecher Grier Halberstam LLP and says that regulations surrounding emulators are more complicated than those for the games themselves. "This is very controversial," he explains, "but if they [emulators] do, without licence, borrow or incorporate third-party technology, they will usually infringe."

So it's illegal to make and distribute emulated games, and it's illegal to make and distribute emulators. What about using them? Guess what – you shouldn't be doing that either. As Simon Halberstam explains, getting your hands on an emulated game is illegal "unless the website or other medium from which they are downloaded expressly or by implication allows copies to be made by way of download."

Play Safe

But there are ways of enjoying emulation that won't see you thrown behind bars or paying a hefty fine. There are still a number of developers who 'understand' emulation, choosing to make ROM images of their 16-bit games legally freeware. Games like Technopop's Mega Drive shooter *Zero Tolerance* (and even its unreleased sequel) are freely available with the developer's consent – if only a few more firms would follow this lead with their older titles the whole issue of piracy and emulation would be much easier to police.

At the moment, organisations such as the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA) use sophisticated software to track down emulation sites. "Once an illegal site is identified the ISP is notified and asked to 'take down' the site," explains ELSPA's deputy director general, Michael Rawlinson. "The owner of the site can appeal if they believe they are not infringing someone else's copyright work. Very few of the hundreds of thousands of site owners ever do, so it is clear they know they are in the wrong."

This method must be working, as bootleg emulation sites are disappearing at a rate of knots, but this system can target legitimate emulation websites.

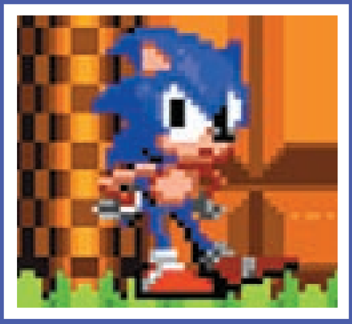
Steve Brown runs The TZX Vault (http://tzxvault.retrogames.com), the preservation website associated with World of Spectrum (www.worldofspectrum.org). Steve's mission is to provide an archive of Spectrum ZX games and make them available to Speccy fans. Along with World Of Spectrum's Martijn van der Heide, he has been contacting programmers and publishers from the Spectrum era to ask for permission to distribute their games – with mostly positive results. World Of Spectrum is officially supported by Amstrad, and over 98 per cent of people contacted give "blanket approval". "This allows free usage of the software on emulators with no strings attached," Brown explains.

In other cases, the copyright holder agrees that their program can only be hosted by The TZX Vault and World Of Spectrum. The third instance is a little more vague, but the games still have the approval of their creators. "An example of this would be Zeppelin which is now known as Eutechnyx," says Brown. "A few years ago I worked for Eutechnyx. While I was there I negotiated the permit from Brian Jobling, the MD, who stated that Eutechnyx would not pursue any claims against anyone using their software. However, as a lot of their games were re-releases, they couldn't guarantee that the original authors or publishers would not."

Brown's determination to do everything above board extends beyond these sites. "When titles are denied distribution, World Of Spectrum does not provide links to the games or even other sites which offer links to download the games," he says. It also means that both websites can keep running when they are visited by anti-piracy authorities. In 1997, World Of Spectrum was contacted by an angry firm. "We received a 'cease and desist' message from a company whose material was in the archive, which of course we removed right away," explains

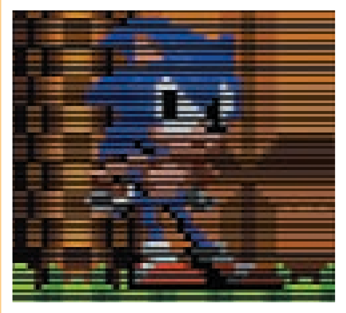
SONIC ONE

A perfect image of the world's favourite hedgehog. Basic display settings render the blue hero like this – pixelated, vivid and just as SEGA intended.



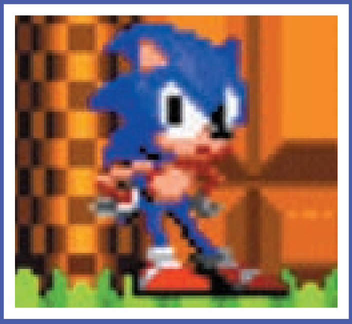
SONIC TWO

An interlacing filter will leave out every other line of the display, making the image look a little odd on its own, but it's closer to what your TV might show.



SONIC THREE

Filtering techniques are constantly moving forwards and there are all manner of effects that can smooth blocky edges at the expense of clarity.



Martijn van der Heide. "This, in fact, triggered our policy to actively seek permission. In 2001, that same company kindly granted permission for free distribution."

Sadly, in today's 'bonus disc' society many firms are reluctant to throw away games that could be offered as incentives to buy new games (the *Zelda* bonus disc is a great example). So while making the original NES *Ninja Gaiden* games available with the new Xbox title is a nice gesture, perhaps making them freely available (even in time-restricted or shortened forms) would open up the series to a new audience – and that's one of the great things about emulation.

Games that were only ever released in Japan, or were simply hard to get hold of, are now available to UK gamers. People can discover classic series and then buy the full games on eBay or from second-hand stores. Trouble is, once you obtain one game ROM it takes a strong will not to slip onto the downward spiral, or in this case the download spiral. With small file sizes and high-speed connections, you can easily amass a 500-game MAME collection in under an hour.

The benefits of emulation for gamers are tremendous and plentiful, often allowing features and ideas that could never have been implemented in the original games and consoles. One of the biggest of these makes online play between emulators a possibility, and while the Xbox is still waiting for its first decent online fighter, emulation makes it possible to take on anyone in the world at *Street Fighter II*.

Many programs also feature the ability to save at any time and even mess around with the code itself, as well as actually tinkering with the speeds at which games run. It's not all about content either, and as anyone who's used any 32-bit emulation or higher will tell you, a good PC can do wonders for the blurry textures and clarity of the N64 and keep PSone games feeling surprisingly fresh. Sprite-based systems also often offer all manner of blitter filters that smooth the video output, making even the blockiest games absolutely silky.

Where Now?

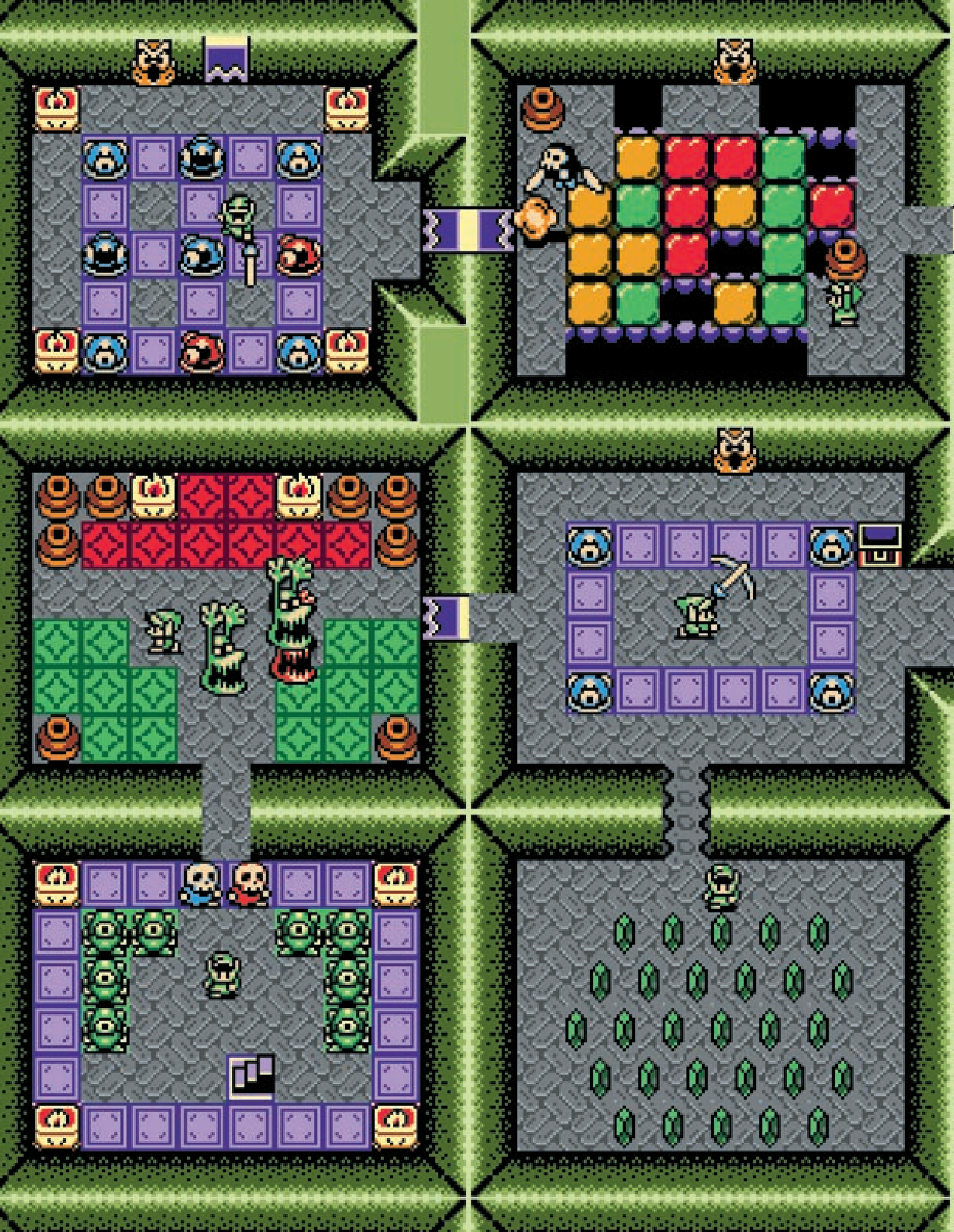
Over the last few years, there's been a noticeable shift in the direction of the emulation scene. With computer emulators now running everything from the 16-bit era and before all but perfectly (and even a lot of later systems), the attention of programmers is being drawn towards pastures new. The Xbox seems to be leading the march for consoles emulating consoles. Running arcade and Neo Geo titles as recent as *Metal Slug 5* and *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos*, emulators like Final Burn are making Microsoft's machine the serial emulator's console of choice, and compatibility with all available programs is nothing short of remarkable. Hell, there are already PSone emulators available for the Xbox.

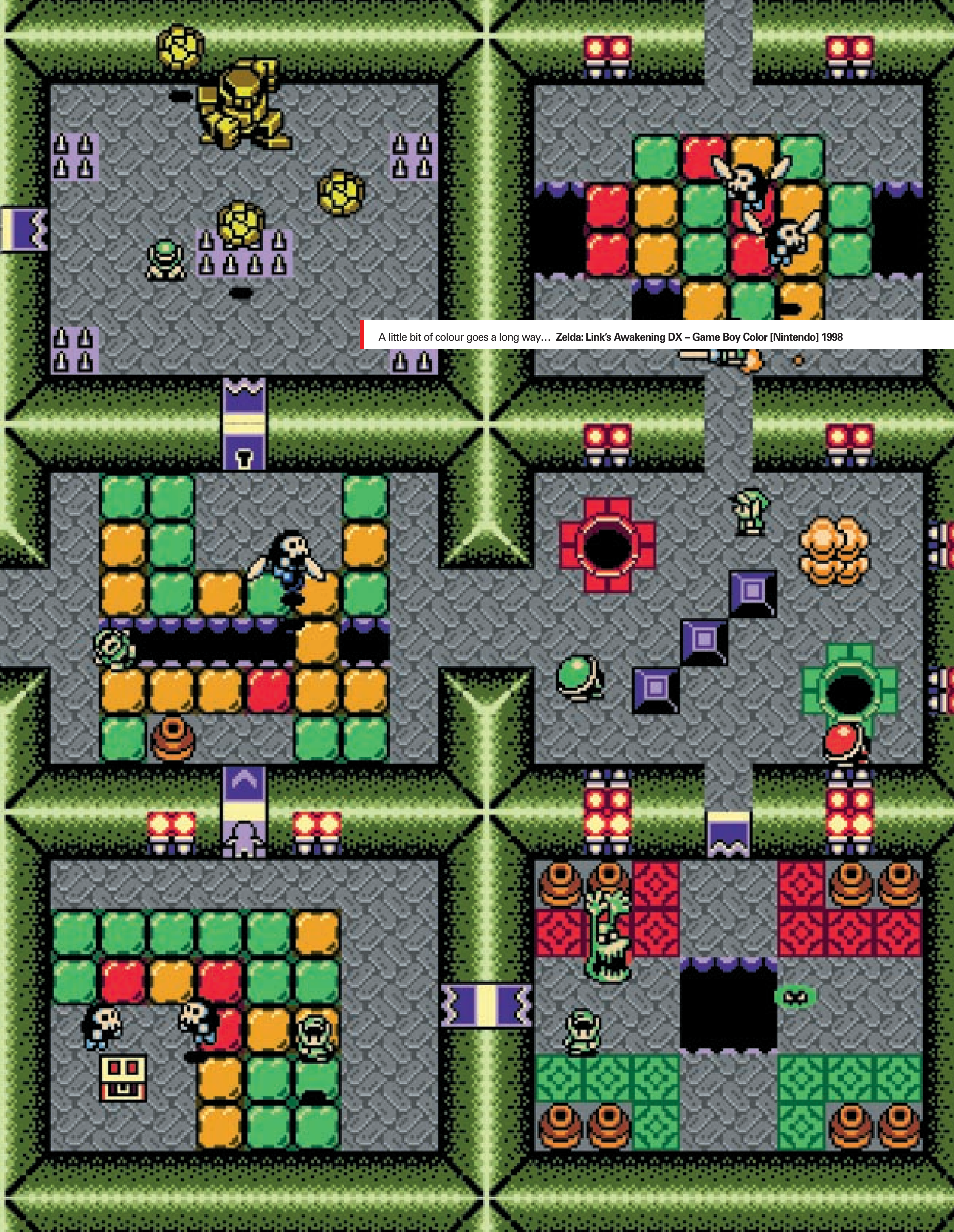
Among the most widespread emulators are those that allow the use of GBA software; a worrying trend given that this is closer to out-and-out piracy than any other form of emulation and gives a false impression of what is largely a very honest community. There will always be those who would never consider buying a game that wasn't current but most people we've encountered will genuinely fork out cash for a game they can play freely if the game is good enough. And most gamers will buy a proper copy of a title simply because there's something to be said for actually having a cartridge, disc, box or manual in your hand. Not only for the fact that it's a legal requirement either – a multitude of other less obvious reasons mean you need to own certain games. Fire up *Super Metroid* or *Tetris* and you'll most likely see what we mean, possibly even finding yourself drawn to your nearest retro shop in a pixel-eyed trance.

Ultimately, we can't condone the use of unofficial emulators to play illegal software. But when the guy next to you on the bus is playing *Pac-man* on his phone, you know something huge is going on and the only thing that could stop it would be something even bigger…



▲ Not every title can be successfully emulated – complicated system procedures can often wreak havoc.





A little bit of colour goes a long way… **Zelda: Link's Awakening DX – Game Boy Color [Nintendo] 1998**



FINAL FIGHT (Arcade) Capcom, 1989 – Original Arcade Flyer

POCKET POWER

Handheld electronic games have always been popular with gamers, but the arrival of Nintendo's Game Boy changed everything. Here was a dedicated console that was completely portable, had a host of great games and, most importantly, could easily fit in your back pocket.

Since it launched in 1989 Nintendo's Game Boy brand has dominated the handheld market and this shows no signs of changing (although Sony's forthcoming PSP may have a say in this matter). Despite the Game Boy's monochrome display and simple visuals, classic titles like *Tetris*, *Super Mario Land* and the ridiculously successful *Pokémon* series have seen Nintendo beat off all competitors. The Atari Lynx, Sega Game Gear, PC Engine GT and Neo-Geo Pocket Colour were all superior machines in terms of aesthetics and power, but simply couldn't compete with Nintendo's all-conquering champion.

Battery life was incredibly important to the handheld gamer on the move and while the Game Boy would keep going for what seemed like days, its competitors would normally only last for a few hours. Needless to say, running these other machines wasn't cheap and with many of them being much larger than the Game Boy, portability was also a problem.

Though the Game Boy reigns supreme, there are more than enough worthy games on all the following machines to make them worth a look, especially as so many of them (PC Engine GT excluded) are so cheap to buy now.



Classic Machine

GAME BOY



Specifications

CPU: Z-80 8-bit Custom CPU
CPU SPEED: 4.19MHz
MEMORY: 64Kbit
RESOLUTION: 160x144
COLOUR PALETTE: 4 (Greyscale)
MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SCREENS: 4
MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SPRITES: 40
SOUND CHANNELS: 4
DIMENSIONS: 148x49x32mm
SCREEN SIZE: 2.5 inches
POWER INPUT: 6V/4 AA Batteries

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY BOXES

As with NES and SNES games, Game Boy software came packaged in cardboard boxes. Though small enough to save a few trees, the boxes were roughly 12x12cm, making them stand out just as much as all the other games on the shelves.

POCKET GAMES

Game Boy games came on little grey cartridges that were a piffling 5x5cm.

BY TODAY'S STANDARDS, THE ORIGINAL GAME BOY IS MORE A BREEZEBLOCK THAN A PORTABLE SYSTEM. BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP IT FROM APPEALING TO MORE THAN 50 MILLION GAMERS AROUND THE WORLD

With strong NES sales around the world, and the Game & Watch range as popular as ever, the latter part of the Eighties saw Nintendo's Gunpei Yokoi and his R&D team putting together a machine that would combine the best of both worlds. By 1987 a prototype of this revolutionary new handheld system was up and running, much to the delight of Nintendo of Japan president Hiroshi Yamauchi who predicted that the company could shift a massive 25 million units within three years if the marketing was right.

Technological limitations at the time meant that the unit's visual display was monochrome and only capable of displaying four shades of grey, though through clever use of pointillism and cross-hatching it was possible for games appear far more detailed than they actually were. Nintendo's decision not to upgrade to colour was purely down to battery life; four AA batteries would give a generous eight to ten hours of gameplay, compared to around two if the machine had run in colour. Not only that, but the unit itself would have been more expensive too.

Less than two years after Yokoi-san's prototype unit was produced, the finished product, now called Game Boy, was being mass produced and many games were in



TOP LOADER

Game Boy game cartridges slotted neatly into the top of the machine. Easy, really.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Although the levels of contrast offered by the Game Boy's monochrome display were minimal, the problem was made worse by the amount of light required for viewing. Unless you were playing in direct sunlight or had access to a bright artificial light, Game Boy games could be unplayable at times. Thankfully, Nintendo (as well as a number of other companies) got around the problem by releasing clip-on lights, some of which included magnifiers to make the screen brighter, bigger and clearer. Later, Nintendo also introduced a backlit version of the Game Boy Pocket, though it was never released outside Japan.



▲ A bit cumbersome, but perhaps worth it for the sake of your eyesight.

SIZE MATTERS

Scaled down by a third, Nintendo's Game Boy Pocket was introduced in 1996 and offered more than ten hours' of gaming from just two AAA batteries. The screen, though still monochrome and the same size as the standard model, was improved, offering better contrast and definition. Tragically, Gunpei Yokoi didn't live to see the machine's continued success as he was killed in a traffic accident shortly after the GB Pocket's launch.



NES CONTROLS

Considering the NES was Nintendo's home console when the Game Boy was released, it's not surprising the machines have similar controls.

NINTENDO'S EYETOY

During a particularly quiet period for the Game Boy, Nintendo released the quirky Game Boy Camera. This innovative little device clipped into the cartridge port and allowed gamers to take low-res photos that could be manipulated on the monochrome screen.

A portable printer was also available, allowing Game Boy photographers to produce stickers of their (rather blurry) creations. The Game Boy Camera, combined with the introduction of *Pokémon*, helped to resurrect public interest in the system. Interest which is still going…

development. Over the next few years, some of Nintendo's biggest franchises would make their way to the format, including *Mario* and *Zelda*, but the game that made all the difference was *Tetris*, a simple puzzle game invented by Russian mathematician Alexey Pajitnov.

Thanks to the simplicity of this world-famous game, consumers everywhere were attracted to the versatile handheld. Amazingly, sales were even higher than Yamauchi-san's initial predictions, with a massive 32 million units shifted within the first three years.



"WHY I LOVE MY GAME BOY"

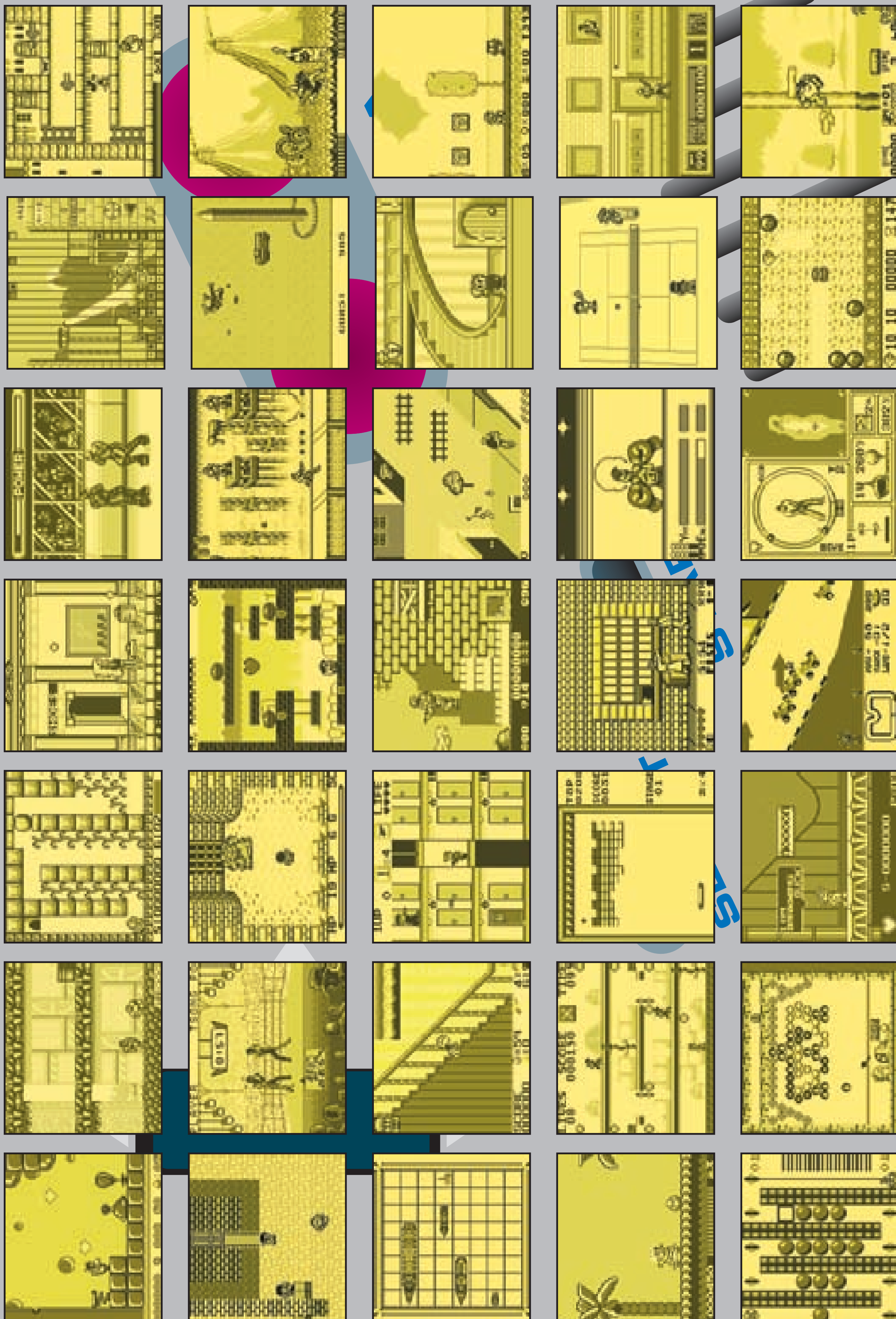
In cars, on buses, in school libraries, on family holidays… anywhere where tedium threatened, the Game Boy was a lifeline. It offered all the excitement of a 'proper' console without having to hog the TV, and there's still something appealing about the machine's design – reassuringly chunky yet still stylish enough to make you want to pick one up. You can stick your fancy GBA SP…

Charlotte Martyn

Classic Machine



Nintendo GAME BOY™



Six of the Best



Just like the PSone, there were shedloads of awful games on the Game Boy. Then again, there were also plenty of great titles



Zelda: Link's Awakening

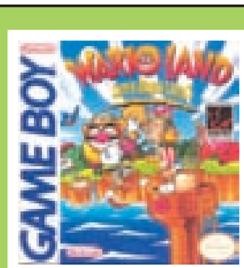
Publisher: Nintendo **Year:** 1993

As the Game Boy matured, Nintendo developed new development tools, making longer titles (such as RPGs) more feasible on the hardware. In 1993, after a few years of research, the company produced a superb version of *Zelda* entitled *Link's Awakening*. Set on Koholint Island, the game sees Link trying to get back to Hyrule before being shipwrecked and caught up in the mysterious occurrences on the island. One of the best in the series.

Super Mario 3: Wario Land

Publisher: Nintendo **Year:** 1994

Having introduced Wario as the bad guy in *Mario Land 2*, Nintendo tried something new with the third game in the series. Rather than playing as Mario, you were Wario, who controlled similarly to the Italian plumber himself, but also had a dash that could take out enemies and smash through walls. With some of the cleverest puzzles seen in a game of this type, *Wario Land* has become a series in its own right, complementing the more action-based *Mario Land* games.





Metroid II: Return Of Samus

Publisher: Nintendo **Year:** 1992

Released in 1992, this really is starting to show its age, though at the time it was rather good. As the second instalment in the *Metroid* series, the game does a good job of mimicking the NES original, though the lack of colours meant that many backgrounds were simply blacked out. But this doesn't affect the gameplay, and although newer titles – such as *Super Metroid* and *Metroid Fusion* – have eclipsed *Return Of Samus*, it's still worth playing if you're a fan.

Donkey Kong Land

Publisher: Nintendo **Year:** 1995

Following Rare's beautiful *Donkey Kong Country* on the SNES, the company developed a version for the Game Boy. Using the Advanced Computer Graphics Modelling system that had been used to create the Super Nintendo game, Rare was able to mimic the original title pretty well, despite only having four shades of grey to work with. Thankfully, the gameplay is decent, even by today's standards, and the game comes on a banana-coloured cartridge.





Super Mario Land

Publisher: Nintendo
Year: 1989

As one of the first Game Boy games released, *Super Mario Land*'s visuals have dated considerably; the sprites are miniscule and there's very little detail in the backgrounds. That said, this 15-year-old title is far more faithful to the *Mario* series than the likes of *Luigi's Mansion* and *Super Mario Sunshine*, despite lacking the precise gameplay of many of its console counterparts. *Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins*, released three years later, was beefed up considerably, and as a result was far more impressive visually.



Pokémon Red/Blue

Publisher: Nintendo
Year: 1996

There's no denying that the Pokémon craze has snowballed in recent years. In fact, for Nintendo it's pretty much single-handedly kept the company afloat in a market dominated by Sony. It's not very hard to see why – the games are actually very playable, not to mention addictive. Just in case you haven't had the opportunity to sample them, the premise is simply to capture a selection of Pokémon (Pocket Monsters) from their natural habitats, train them up, and battle them against other characters or human players via system link. The ads were true – you have got to catch 'em all…

ROM SERVICE

THE GAME BOY HAS PROVED AN UNFORTUNATE TARGET FOR SOFTWARE EMULATORS TRYING TO COPY ITS GAMES, BUT NINTENDO HAS FOUND A WAY TO STRIKE BACK…

However you look at it, Nintendo's anti-piracy policy is far from discreet. The Japanese giant has already had a huge number of websites shut down for hosting illegal material, and even when it comes to borderline issues like importing, the firm has shown that it's not to be trifled with.

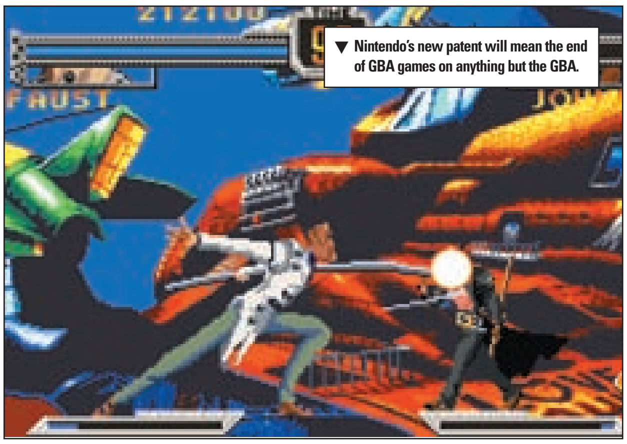
Nintendo's latest move to crack down on emulation is strangely ingenious – it has patented the idea of Game Boy Advance emulation. This means that any future GBA emulators on any platform will be infringing copyright and therefore illegal. As well as being a deterrent to PC users and coders, it will be particularly useful in preventing emulators appearing on mobile phones and PDAs, and even future consoles like the PSP.

THE POWER OF THE PATENT

The patent (number 6,672,963, fact fans) was actually filed four years ago by Patrick J. Link on behalf on Nintendo, but was only granted in January 2004. "This invention relates to systems, methods, techniques, data structures, and other features for running software applications including but not limited to videogames on platforms different from the ones the software is intended or designed to run on," states the official US Patent Office record of Nintendo's 'invention', seemingly opening the floodgates for all manner of lawsuits against any program that it believes to be an infringement.

The first such project to be hit was Firestorm gbaZ, a GBA emulator for the fledgling Tapwave Zodiac. Canadian developer Crimson Fire was sent a 'cease and desist' warning on the day the emulator was due to be shipped. Kyle Poole, head of the project, had to spread the bad news via the Crimson Fire forum. "Unfortunately, we have no choice but to hold off on the Firestorm release until we can consult a lawyer, and if we choose not to go ahead because of the big N, then we will of course refund everyone's money," he wrote. If this matter does end up going to court, the might of Nintendo is likely to prevail. Not only will it be able to argue copyright infringement, but also a patent violation for the act of emulation.

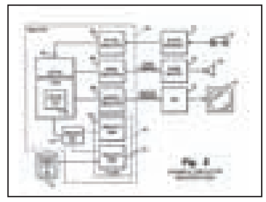
The patent is certainly a smart move by Nintendo, but could it be deemed an abuse of the US Patent system, a service put in place to protect new intellectual properties and promote originality? With the patent now in force this worry is irrelevant, but it will be interesting to see where the patent takes the grey area of emulation.



▼ Nintendo's new patent will mean the end of GBA games on anything but the GBA.

FIGHT THE POWER

Despite now having legal grounds to close emulators, it remains to be seen whether Nintendo will try to shut down existing GBA emulators, which now number almost double figures. A loophole within the patent itself refers to emulators that can tailor the way they work depending on the ROM image used, something that applies more to the likes of the N64 emulator UltraHLE and excludes current GBA emulators. But while the wording may be slightly off, it's best to see this as a blanket warning from Nintendo.



▼ The emulators created before the patent was granted should be unaffected by it, but future emulations may well land their creators in court.





SPECIFICATIONS

CPU: Toshiba TLCS900H (16-bit)
CPU Speed: 6.144 MHz
MEMORY: ROM: 64Kb boot ROM
RAM: 128 Kbytes
RESOLUTION: 160 x 152
COLOUR PALETTE: 4,096
MAX COLOURS: 146
MAX NUMBER OF SPRITES: 64 per frame
MAX COLOURS PER SPRITE: 4
SOUND: PROCESSOR: Z80 (3.072 MHz)
FUNCTIONS: PSG six-tone simultaneous stereo output
POWER SUPPLY: 2 x AA batteries or AC adaptor
OTHER FUNCTIONS: World clock, calendar, horoscope and alarm (requires lithium battery)
COMMUNICATIONS: SIO 1 Channel 19200 bps, five-pin serial port

NEOGEO POCKET COLOR

WITH SNK'S STYLE LOOKING OUT OF DATE, THE COMPANY SHOULD HAVE INVESTED IN STAFF TRAINING. INSTEAD IT POURED ITS REMAINING FUNDS INTO A HANDHELD CONSOLE TO GO HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH NINTENDO'S GAME BOY…

Somehow, SNK obviously thought it had a chance against Nintendo's Game Boy when it released the Neo-Geo Pocket Color. The company had entered the handheld market a few months previously with the monochrome Neo-Geo Pocket, but Nintendo was already promoting its Game Boy Color. Unperturbed by the competition, however, SNK went back to the drawing board and re-launched its portable console with a colour screen on 18 March 1999.

It couldn't really compete effectively with the Game Boy and its huge back catalogue, but for SNK's loyal fans it was a dream come true.

The Neo-Geo Pocket Color (NGPC) had a clear display, and its powerful graphics chips and 16-bit central processor meant Neo-Geo titles could be ported across without losing too much gameplay. Games such as *Samurai Spirits* (*Samurai Shodown*) and *Fatal Fury*, for example, were redrawn with super-deformed characters to make them stand out on the small screen, while the likes of *Metal Slug* and *Puzzle Bobble* (*Bust-A-Move*) were simplified but remained in their original style. There were original titles too, such as *SNK Vs. Capcom: Match Of The Millennium* which featured a massive 26 fighters and some classic gameplay.

Of course, the selection of one-on-one beat-'em-ups and puzzle games was never going to appeal to everyone. Although SNK was desperately trying to expand by encouraging third-party developers to create games for the system, few were interested due to the relatively small user base. Even so, Sega (which was still trying to promote the Dreamcast) collaborated with SNK to produce *Sonic The Hedgehog: Pocket Adventure*, which was Sonic's first 2D outing in four years and worked well on the portable system. But the NGPC needed more games and, aside from a handful of Japanese card battlers, new titles just didn't arrive fast enough.

The situation for the handheld was worse in America where the software catalogue wasn't bolstered by these card battlers or fruit-machine simulators.

But even in Japan it didn't take long for the novelty to wear off. After seven months on sale the NGPC's price was cut from ¥8,000 (£45) to just ¥6,800 (£35). In the UK, shops were left with hundreds of unsold systems (despite the low







"WHY I LOVE MY NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR"

Although I've always loved *Tetris* and *Mario Land,* I never really enjoyed playing on the monochrome Game Boy; the screen was too dull and there were far too many awful games to wade through. The Neo-Geo Pocket Color, on the other hand, offered everything I was looking for from a handheld console – a colour screen, conversions of SNK's brilliant fighting games, and more than 20 hours of gameplay from just two paltry AA batteries.

Keith Edwards

ET



£59.99 price) and most were returned to warehouses within weeks of the launch.

This poor reception was bad news for the already struggling SNK, and three years after the launch of the NGPC the company declared itself bankrupt. Perhaps because of its short-lived shelf life the classy handheld has amassed something of a cult following, with certain titles (most notably *Faselei*) becoming highly collectable.

A DREAM COME TRUE

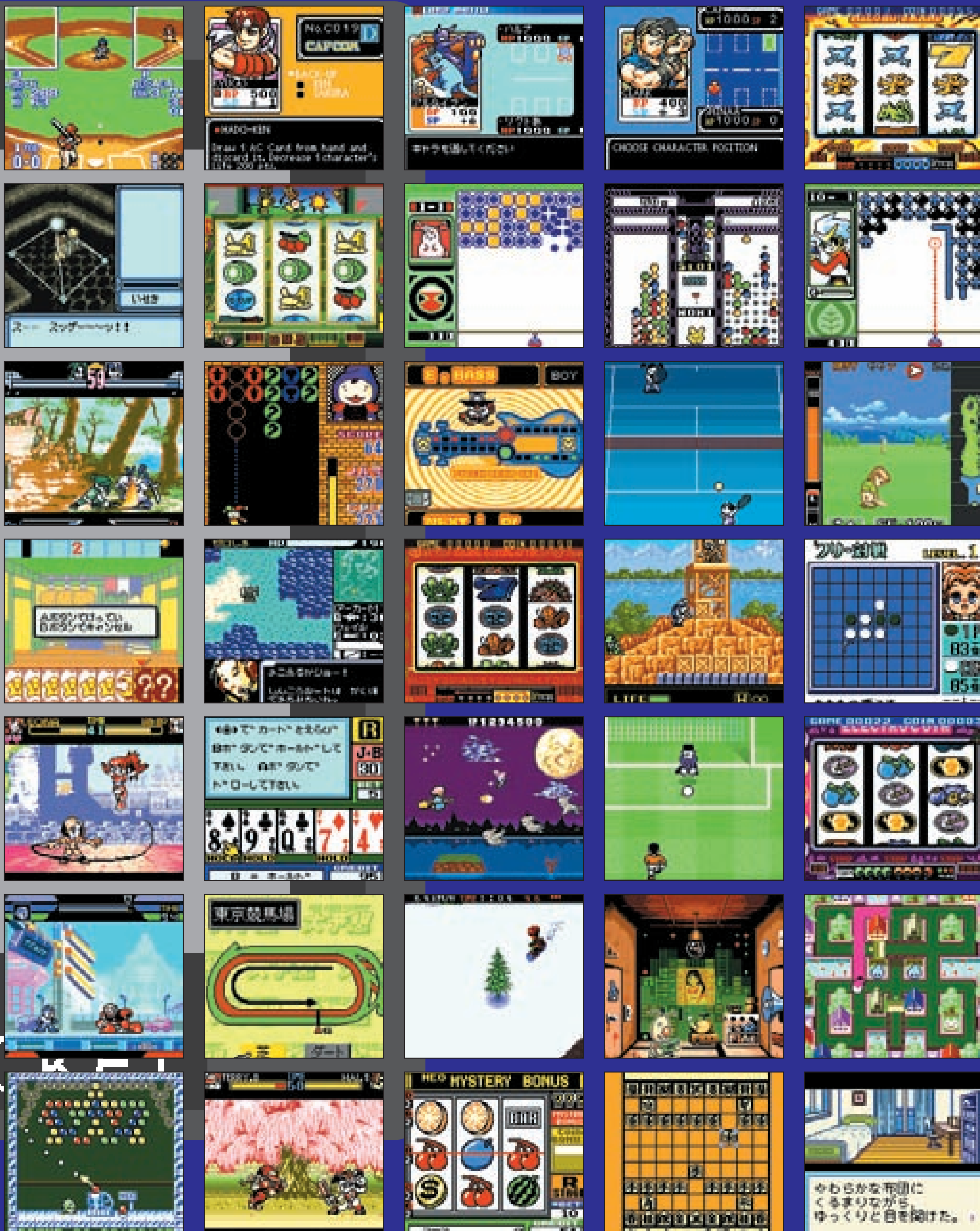
Although they were made by different manufacturers it was possible to link the Neo-Geo Pocket Color and Sega's Dreamcast together to unlock bonus features. With *The King Of Fighters R2,* for example, players could build up their character's stats on the portable game, then upload them to the Dreamcast and continue playing on *The King Of Fighters '99.* Predictably, there were only a few Japanese gamers who owned both systems and took advantage of the function, so neither company really benefited from the system.



Classic Machine



NEOGEO POCKET



Six of the Best



As SNK was struggling to stay in business, the Neo-Geo Pocket Color failed to reach its full potential. That said, though, there were more than enough decent first-party games available to warrant a purchase

Samurai Spirits 2

Publisher: SNK **Year:** 1999

Like so many of SNK's Neo-Geo Pocket games, *Samurai Sprits 2* (which was merely a colour version of the monochrome game released earlier) featured super-deformed characters that were easy to see on the small screen. While the conversion didn't include all the fighters from the Neo-Geo arcade and AES versions, those that were in the game boasted a surprisingly large catalogue of special moves that worked well with just two buttons and a control stick.



SVC: Match Of The Millennium



Publisher: SNK **Year:** 1999

Although *Street Fighter Alpha 3* for GBA has since upped the ante as far as portable beat-'em-ups go, *SNK Vs. Capcom: Match Of The Millennium* was at the top of its genre back in 1999. Featuring a massive line-up of 26 characters, the game included almost all the favourites complete with nearly all their moves. You could even link it up to *Capcom Vs SNK* on the Dreamcast to unlock additional materials, though the leads to do so were only available in Japan.

Metal Slug: 1st Mission

Publisher: SNK **Year:** 1999

Along with *King Of Fighters, Samurai Shodown* and *Fatal Fury, Metal Slug* is one of SNK's most popular series – and one that converted surprisingly well to the Neo-Geo Pocket Color. Despite its gory visuals and war theme, the original arcade game featured semi-cutesy characters, stunning animation and huge explosions. Much of the peripheral detail was cut out of the pocket version, though the overall look and gameplay were the same.



Pocket Tennis Color



Publisher: SNK **Year:** 1999

As simple as it looked, *Pocket Tennis Color* was extremely easy to pick up and play, and it lasted for hours. Two game modes were available – Exhibition and Tournamen –, with the latter giving you the opportunity to earn four additional characters, each with their own abilities. What's more, seeing as the Neo-Geo Pocket Color had a built-in clock, the game cleverly awarded you with cups resembling different star signs depending on what time of the year you were playing.



Sonic Pocket Adventure

Publisher: SNK
Year: 1999

Sonic The Hedgehog: Pocket Adventure arrived on SNK's mini machine prior to Sega officially going multiformat thanks to a deal between the two companies. It was the first 2D Sonic game to launch since *Chaotix* on the 32X four years previously, and while it didn't offer anything new or unique, it was certainly a competent little title. In terms of style, the game was more like *Sonic 2* than any of the other games in the series, and still stands up well against the GBA and N-Gage versions.

Bust-A-Move Pocket

Publisher: SNK
Year: 1999

Although *Bust-A-Move* has appeared on just about every format known to man, the Neo-Geo Pocket version arrived before the GBA was available, and as such was the best portable *Bust-A-Move* at that time. The screen was just big enough to do the game justice, though the pastel-shaded display meant that certain colours – most notably pink and orange – were difficult to distinguish. Thankfully, that wasn't enough to stop this fine puzzle game from working well on the format.





TOKI (Various Home Systems) Ocean, 1991 – UK Advertisement

Sure, Sega's Game Gear was technically impressive, but if you wanted to a gaming marathon you needed to look elsewhere

GAME GEAR



SPECIFICATIONS

CPU: 8-bit Z80 processor
CPU SPEED: 3.58 MHz
MEMORY: 8K RAM, 16K Video RAM
RESOLUTION: 160x146
MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SPRITES: 64
COLOURS: 32 on-screen from a palette of 4096
SOUND: 4-channel stereo
STORAGE: Cartridge
INPUT/OUTPUT: Gear-to-Gear cable port, headphone jack

GO WHERE YOU WANNA

Of all the handheld consoles ever created, the Game Gear's D-pad was perhaps the best. As well as being responsive and accurate, it also featured raised plastic wedges between the four directions, making rolling motions more comfortable.

Back in 1991, with Nintendo's Game Boy already proving that a handheld system with interchangeable games could be highly successful, Sega released its own portable console, the Game Gear. The Mega Drive was performing well at retail, and with the company's solid understanding of graphics technology, Sega was fairly certain that it could manufacture a piece of hardware that was more advanced than Nintendo's.

The Game Boy's dated monochrome display severely limited the visual quality of its games, so surely a splash of colour from Sega would be more than enough to attract a good percentage of gamers. Initially going on sale in America at $159.99 (£95), the system quickly built up a healthy following.

Far more stylish than the Game Boy, the system came in a sleek black finish and was quite clearly designed to look cool. In fact, the 'grown-up' appearance of the hardware played a big part in the marketing – Sega claimed the Game Gear would 'Separate the men from the boys', obviously having a pop at Nintendo at the same time. However, despite the machine's great aesthetics and colour screen, Sega had overlooked one vitally important element – the battery life.

Powered by no less than six AA batteries, the Game Gear disappointed some owners by offering just three hours' worth of entertainment before running out of juice, making the machine incredibly expensive to run.

A power supply unit was available for a small sum, of course, but being permanently plugged into a socket completely undermined the point of it being a portable system in the first place. Despite its shortcomings, though, the Game Gear actually boasted an extremely solid catalogue of games – more than 240 in fact.

Among the line-up were classics such as *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Shinobi*, as well as Game Gear exclusives like *Ax Battler*, which took the *Golden Axe* theme and turned it into an RPG.

There was also a converter known as the Master Gear which enabled Game Gear owners to play Master System games on their portable consoles. And, of course, there was the TV adaptor…

Classic Machine



GG TV

Aside from being a (semi) portable games console, the Game Gear also doubled as a handheld television, provided you were lucky enough to own a TV Tuner. These pricey little add-ons fitted straight into the cartridge slot and featured an extendable antenna and analogue tuner capable of receiving all terrestrial television channels. Although slightly bulky, the GG TV tuner is still extremely sought-after, and regularly sells for as much as £50.



▲ It looks like a clock radio (without the clock) but the TV Tuner is still a popular piece of kit.

TWO BUTTONS

Two buttons were enough for the many Master System games that were ported.

COLOUR SCREEN

The backlit colour screen was attractive, but meant that battery life was short.

"WHY I LOVE MY GAME GEAR"

Aside from battery life, Sega's 'portable' beauty was a machine way ahead of its time. A slew of excellent exclusives joined forces with the best the Master System could offer to ensure that proud Game Gear owners would have just as much to shout about as those carrying the green-screened enemy.

Luke Albigés

GAMING GOODNESS

Over 240 games were released for the Game Gear, with many more becoming available if you bought the Master Gear Converter. Games tended to retail for around £30, and many of Sega's classic titles were among the line-up. The system even had its very own *Mario Kart* clones in the form of the *Sonic Drift* series.



AROUND THE BACK



It was lucky the Game Gear had a compatible power supply unit, as six AA batteries only lasted for a couple of hours. Alternatively, there was also a car adaptor that plugged into the cigarette lighter.

The game cartridges themselves were small and stylish, and came in protective plastic cases.

Although the sound capabilities of the machine were limited, the output was loud and crisp. For anyone playing in public, a headphone socket was included on top of the unit.

Classic Machine



SEGA



Six of the Best

The Game Gear may have been a little too big for your pocket, but many gamers put up with its size to play some of these well-known titles…

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1991**

Although it was perfectly playable, *Sonic The Hedgehog* for the Game Gear lacked some of the refinement of its Mega Drive older brother. Backgrounds were flatter, Sonic himself was a little less detailed, and everything was cut down for the handheld system. Almost identical to the Master System version, it was only when the two were side by side that you discovered that all the sprites had been enlarged for the pocket translation to make things easier to see on the small screen.

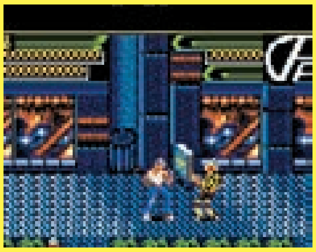


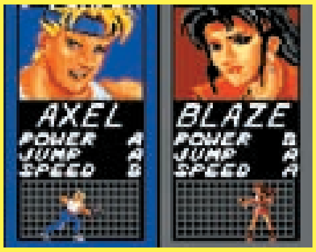


STREETS OF RAGE

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1992**

Based on the Mega Drive game, *Streets Of Rage* on the Game Gear was something of a butchered affair. Adam Hunter (the third playable character in the original version) had been removed from the game, leaving just Axel Stone and Blaze Fielding to take on the criminal scum that patrolled the streets of Capital City. Despite the obvious omissions, though, the pocket game managed to capture the spirit of the original perfectly and even featured Yuzo Koshiro's music score.





AX BATTLER: A LEGEND OF GOLDEN AXE

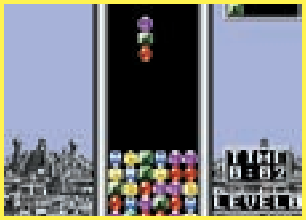
Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1991**



Although *Ax Battler* was based on the arcade game *Golden Axe*, its gameplay was completely different. Rather than simply walking from left to right while hacking at enemies, this little gem revolved around successfully reaching new towns where new moves could be added to your repertoire. Like *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link*, *Ax Battler* had elements of scrolling beat-'em-up and platform gaming, though most people referred to it as an RPG.

COLUMNS

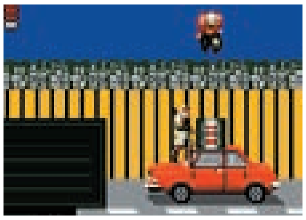
Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1991**



Nintendo had *Tetris*, so Sega needed a pocket puzzle game of its own. And what better way to show off its spangly new handheld system than by releasing something similar to the Nintendo game, but with a splash of colour and a little more flair. Of course, *Columns*' colour-matching gameplay would never surpass *Tetris*' sheer playability, though it certainly gave it a good run for its money. Unfortunately, Sega's puzzle effort also featured some highly irritating music and was, as it is now, constantly in the shadow of Nintendo's block dropper.

THE GG SHINOBI

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1991**



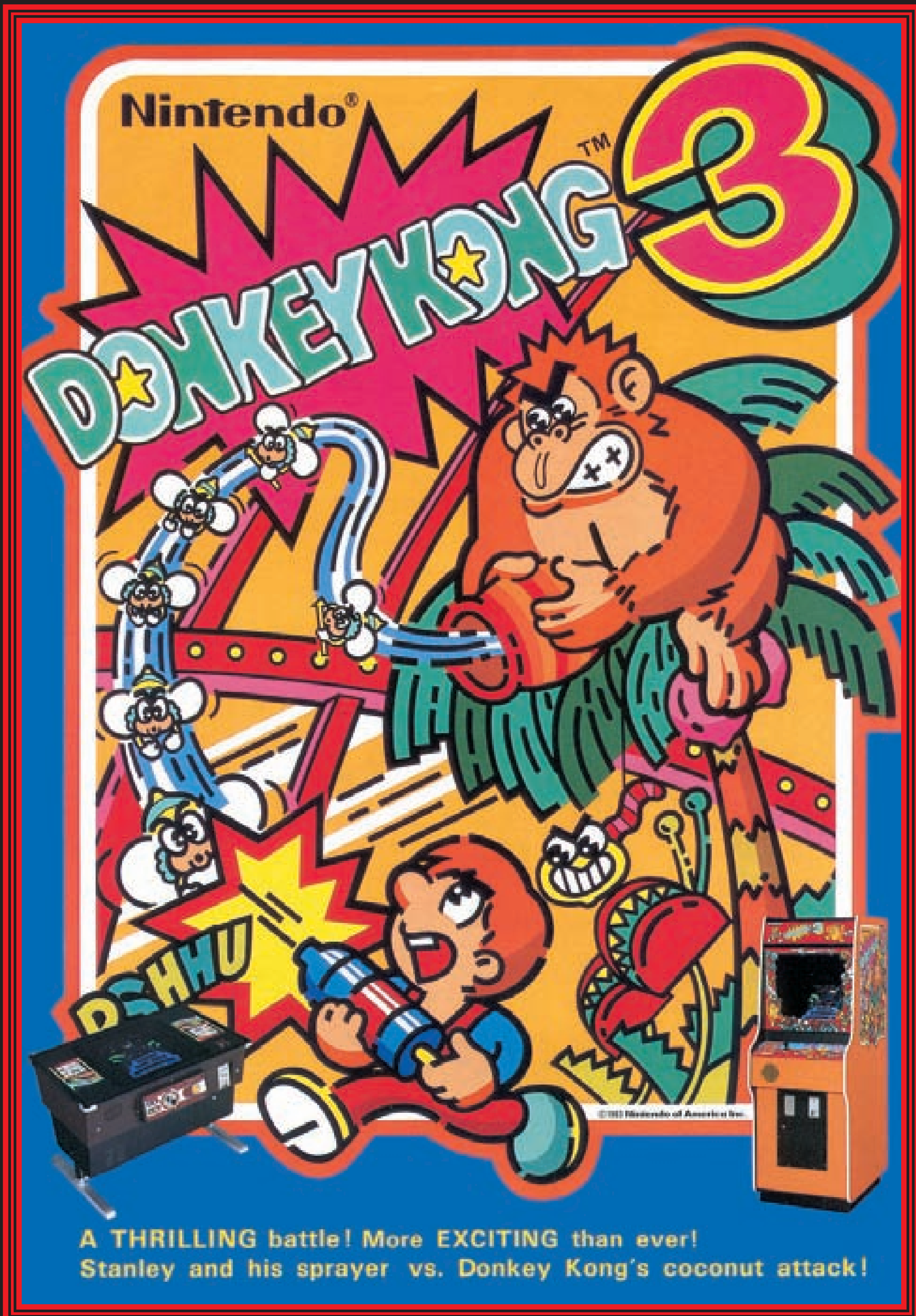
With all those classic arcade games ripe for translation, it wasn't too surprising that *Shinobi* was released for the Game Gear. Interestingly, many gamers actually considered it to be one of the better conversions; although visually it wasn't a patch on the original, the gameplay translated exceptionally well to the small screen. Furthermore, to shake up the gameplay a little, the five different locations (which had been designed specifically for the handheld) could be approached in different orders to gain secret power-ups.

CRYSTAL WARRIORS

Publisher: **Sega**
Year: **1991**



Back in 1991, handheld RPGs were few and far between. Due to a lack of memory on the tiny cartridges, and because battery back-up was still relatively new, the genre simply didn't translate that well to portable systems. Even so, *Crystal Warriors* was a surprisingly solid attempt, which featured turn-based battles and traditional Wind, Water, Earth and Fire elements. Similar to *Final Fantasy Tactics*, the action was based around a chessboard-like grid, though here it was viewed from a top-down perspective.

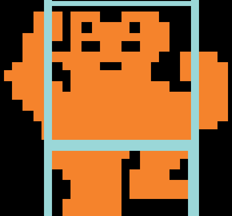


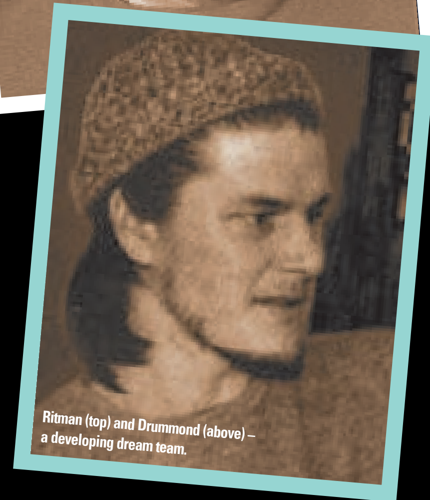
DONKEY KONG 3 (Arcade) Nintendo, 1983 – Original Arcade Flyer



THEY SAY TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE, AND WHEN JON RITMAN AND BERNIE DRUMMOND WORKED TOGETHER ON GAMES LIKE HEAD OVER HEELS AND MATCH DAY II, GAMERS WERE TREATED TO SOMETHING SPECIAL. WE CAUGHT UP WITH JON AND BERNIE TO FIND THE SECRET OF THEIR SUCCESS

JON RITMAN AND BERNIE DRUMMOND





Ritman (top) and Drummond (above) – a developing dream team.

In 1981 Jon Ritman decided to buy himself a ZX81 and learn to program. After a week of extremely late nights and plentiful cups of coffee, Ritman thought he was ready for a new challenge and bought himself a RAMpack and a book on machine code. Six months later, he completed his first game – *Namtir Raiders* was sold in two days and published by Artic Computing Limited. It was a clone of *Space Invaders* with the option to move your base up and down as well as left and right. It was simple but effective.

"I had seen an arcade game in a pub," reveals Ritman. "I simply tried to copy the rough memory I had of the early levels – I could only do the early levels though, because I had never been good enough to get any further."

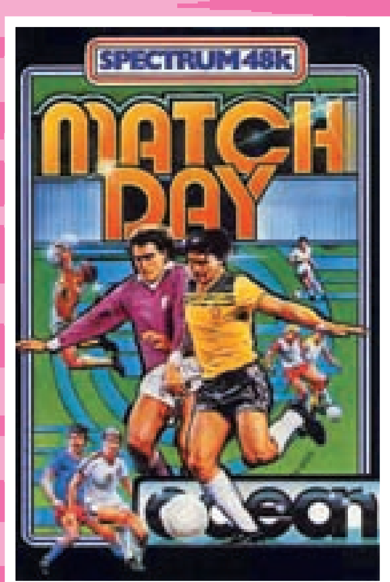
The likes of *Cosmic Debris* (an *Asteroids* clone) and *Bear Bovver* (a very well-received platformer) soon followed and Ritman quit the day job to program full time. *Bear Bovver* also marked Ritman's departure from Artic and before long he would be competing against it with the release of *Match Day*.

Bat Man was Ritman's next release and found him pairing up with Bernie Drummond after hearing that Drummond was good at drawing. A partnership was quickly formed, with the duo going on to make the likes of the superb *Head Over Heels*, *Match Day II* and the isometric adventure *Monster Max* for Rare.

Despite enjoying success in the Eighties, things later took a turn for the worse. Cranberry Source was formed in 1995 and saw Ritman and his team working on the much-hyped *QAD* (*Quintessential Art Of Destruction*). When *QAD* eventually appeared, it was a competent but lacklustre title that did little to convince the industry that Cranberry Source would be a development team worth watching. Argonaut eventually bought Cranberry Source's key assets in 1998.

We caught up with two of the finest minds in 8-bit gaming to ask about Rare, designing characters and to find out what happened to the fabled *Match Day* arcade machine…

MATCH DAY



When *Match Day* first appeared on the Spectrum it was heralded as the greatest football game of its generation (it was basically the retro equivalent of Konami's *Pro Evolution Soccer*). There was a plethora of options that gave you the ability to change your playing times, choose from three skill levels and even change the game's borders. *Match Day*'s real clincher, though, was that it was simply amazing to play; players reacted incredibly well to each other, the side-on view meant it was always easy to see what was going on and corners, goal kicks and centres came with three different kicking strengths.

Match Day initially came about thanks to the C64's *International Soccer* (the industry felt that the Spectrum needed a really good football game of its own). Ritman started designing the characters – which were basically a human variation of the Bear from *Bear Bovver* – and eventually discussed his idea with Ocean's David Ward while watching a new soccer release by Artic. "I made a wild claim that my football game would be a thousand times better than Artic's," he recalls. "As I was in the last few weeks of finishing, he [Ward] rang me and asked me If I'd ever made 'that football game'. I told him that it was nearly finished and on the spot he offered me more money than I'd ever heard of."



▲ *Match Day*'s vast (for its time) range of options gave the game much more depth than its rivals.

RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION
Developer lookback

When did you first get into programming?
Jon: 1981. I was a TV engineer and thought my company (Radio Rentals) would need a computer engineer as they were thinking of renting Atari 800s.

How did your partnership with each other come about?
Jon: Bernie was a friend of a friend and I knew he drew cartoons, so one day as I was starting my first isometric adventure, which went on to become *Bat Man*, I asked him over to give it a try.
Bernie: I met Jon through mutual friends and at the time I was playing drums in a group that just happened to be friends with Jon. Because he was always up late at night we'd constantly be going around his house at around 11.30 with a new demo tape asking "Hi, Jon, what do you think of this?" Poor Jon had to put up with a lot of shoddy practice tapes before we eventually got talking properly.

What was it like working with each other and do you still regularly keep in touch?
Jon: Bernie is the maddest, most random, most un-technical artist you could ever meet. He is also the most creative. Yeah, we do try and stay in contact but see each other far too rarely.
Bernie: It was very, very easy working with Jon, he's got the biblical patience of Job and was a very good teacher. We eventually grew apart but are now back in touch with each other.

What was your ethos for creating games, and was there anybody you wanted to emulate?
Jon: Not emulate as such but there is little doubt that my biggest inspirations were the Stamper brothers [Chris, Tim and Stephen Stamper who formed Ultimate and then Rare].

How does it feel creating some of the most loved 8-bit games ever made?
Jon: Damn good – it's great that many years after I made my 8-bit games they still create enough interest that I still get at least one mail a week either asking me about them or just writing to thank me for the amount of fun they generated. When you consider that we are talking about 15-odd years ago I find it just amazing that anyone even remembers what they were playing, let alone feels strongly enough to write to me.

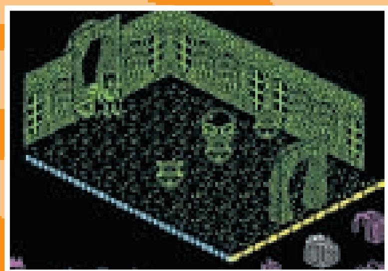
BAT MAN

After being astounded by Rare's *Knight Lore*, Ritman was determined to write his own isometric adventure – *Bat Man* was the finished product and was a smash hit. The basic plot of *Bat Man* saw Robin being captured. Unfortunately, the Boy Wonder had been working on the Batmobile at the time and Batman had to track down the seven missing pieces of the car before he could spring into action.

Although his powers were initially limited, there were several devices Batman could find that afforded him new powers, be it Batboots for jumping, or the Batbag that allowed him to pick up and put down objects. Batpills also made a frequent appearance and would fall from the roof of the Batcave – the pills offered you random abilities ranging from super jumps to invulnerability. There was also a neutralising pill that would take away any current ability, and seeing that all the pills looked the same it made for some very frustrating moments.

Bat Man's visuals were very impressive and marked Ritman's first collaboration with Bernie Drummond. "He went from crazy doodler to craftsman instantly," says Ritman of Drummond's first experience of creating visuals after an initially slow start. "He sculpted a matching eye and then an entire character – it was without doubt one of the best bits of game art I had ever seen."





What's the best 3D isometric game ever made and why?
Jon: *Monster Max*. It would be odd if I didn't think my games were the best – if I'd thought I couldn't do a better job of it than any others out there I simply wouldn't have bothered. *Max* is the most recent of my isometric games and of course was built on my collected knowledge of the first two – it had bigger and far more complex locations and over twice as many as *Head Over Heels*.

How did you go about designing your characters?
Bernie: They're composites – they're a bit of a smile from somewhere and a bit of an eye from somewhere else. They developed a cartoony style and if anyone was ever critical of us it was because of that. We decided to make our characters extra chunky so that you could always see if they would be touching something dangerous – rather than make Batman realistic, we based him on Felix the Cat so that his head was as wide as his shoulders which were as wide as his legs, so that effectively he took up an oblong shape and you collided with an object properly. Otherwise my inspirations were Disney, Salvador Dali and Charlie Brown.

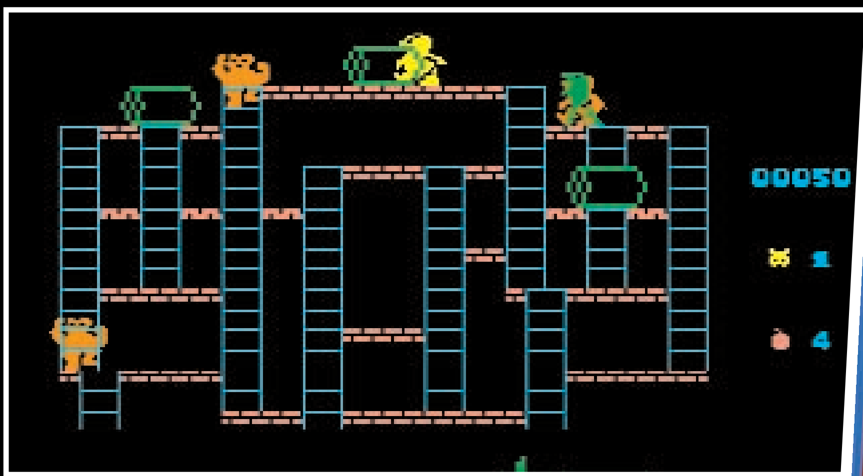
Where did the idea for Head Over Heels *come from?*
Bernie: The symbiotic nature of the characters where they used each other was entirely Jon's idea – he had read or watched something about it and the idea simply intrigued him.

And was there any truth in the rumour that it was earmarked for the N64?
Jon: None at all.

In its day, Match Day *was deemed the god of football games. Have you had a chance to play its present day equivalent,* Pro Evolution Soccer*?*
Jon: Not yet.

Were the old days of gaming better?
Jon: It was much nicer to work in tiny teams, the output per person was much higher and you could take much bigger chances.

And who were your 8- and 16-bit heroes?
Jon: The Stamper brothers were always ahead of the pack, changing the face of the industry – I'm sure I'm not the only one who can remember the first time they saw *Knight Lore* (and the way their jaw hit the floor). And to think they had





▲ *Bear Bovver* saw you helping Ted the bear collect batteries to power his car, while avoiding those pesky Bovver Bears. Addictive stuff.

finished it a year earlier and had held it back in case it damaged sales of their 2D games!

How easy was it setting up Cranberry Source?
Jon: Far too easy. If it had been harder I would have made a better job of it.

And how did you come up with the name?
Jon: A random comment when I said we needed something crazy like Cranberry Sauce. My business partner, John Cook, thought of the re-spelling and the name stuck.

What were your intentions behind Cranberry Source and do you think that QAD harmed the company's success?
Jon: The main problems at Cranberry Source were the changes in the market and the pressure it put on the company.

How did working for Rare come about? Did they approach you first or did you go to them?
Bernie: When Rare first advertised for work we heard a rumour that they were Ultimate. So Jon phoned them hoping that if they were Ultimate they would understand who we were. He phoned them up and said: "I hear you're looking for programmers." The reply was: "Ah, Jon Ritman, you're the first name on our list." They encouraged us to come down and do what we liked – they gave us freedom, time and plenty of space to create something.

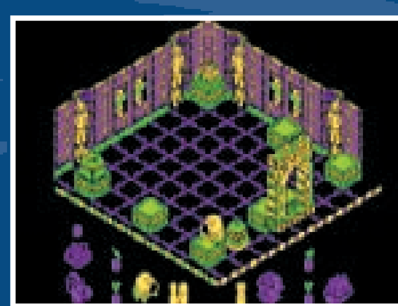
Which of your games is your favourite?
Jon: To play, *Super Match Soccer* – bloody good soccer game that relies on the skill of the players and not on computer aid – it makes a two-player game very challenging. Otherwise, *Monster Max* – it took the isometric game one stage further.
Bernie: *Head Over Heels* was like making a dress out of silk – it didn't matter if the dress was rubbish as you were using that silk. We'd already had a dry run with *Bat Man* and soon had everybody trying to reproduce it (we later learned that Ultimate was really impressed with it), so *Bat Man* felt like luxury. The experience was like having already won the FA cup



HEAD OVER HEELS

Originally known as the rural-sounding *Foot And Mouth*, *Head Over Heels* is seen by many as Jon and Bernie's greatest achievement. "When we started on *Head Over Heels* we knew we weren't fighting for a new niche in the market and that we could simply concentrate on making it plush," Bernie recalls. And very plush it was too. It was twice the size of *Bat Man*, had more refined visuals and had the genius addition of two characters who not only had their own abilities (Head could fly, Heels was fast and could jump), but could also join together to solve puzzles. "It's strange how the use of two characters was hailed as a creative masterstroke," says Ritman. "At the time I just thought of it as a way to give slightly more complex puzzles."

Starting in separate prison cells, your first task was to join Head and Heels together. After that it was simply a case of escaping the prison of planet Blacktooth and going on to save four imprisoned worlds. Egyptus, Book World, Safari and Penitentiary were all huge locations where the intrepid duo searched for each world's crown. *Head Over Heels*' best aspect, however, was its overall surrealism; rabbits fell from the sky to grant extra lives and other abilities, doughnuts were used as ammunition, and then you had the odd couple themselves…



▲ *Head Over Heels* was a huge success for Ritman and Drummond, and one of their best-looking titles.

MATCH DAY II

After the success of *Match Day*, it was inevitable that there would be a sequel – *Match Day II* was the result and improved on the original in every way. The first thing you noticed was the game's improved visuals. "Bernie made a much better job of the graphics than I had in the earlier version," recalls Ritman. Players were a lot more compact and had a similar chunky style to both *Bat Man* and *Head Over Heels* – "but effectively they were like that because we had watched football games where the ball would bounce off the edge of a [sprite] box, before it got anywhere near the actual drawing," explains Drummond.





The resized visuals allowed for even greater realism than before and were lapped up by an adoring public. Ritman had also gone back to the core of the game to offer even more of the football experience that fans of the original craved. Controllable kicks, an important back-pass feature and the ability for two players to team up against the computer ensured that *Match Day's* sequel was a more than worthy follow-up to its illustrious predecessor.

One problem with the original *Match Day* was the conversions it had received – "the versions for the BBC, C64 and Amstrad CPC were programmed by others who didn't even talk to me about it – I thought the versions were dire," laments Ritman. The sequel received rather better treatment. "I can remember spending over a day on the phone with me single stepping [a debugging term] through the Z80 code while the 6502 programmer did the same at his end with the C64 translation," says Ritman. As a result, even more gamers got to experience the genius of *Match Day II*.



rather than struggling to do something we'd never achieved before.

How do you feel about the videogames industry today?

Jon: Hamstrung by the cost of producing each game it dare not take chances and has to make nearly every game multiplatform, therefore working to the lowest common denominator – look how the N64 and Cube games are much better due to the single platform.

Bernie: It must be like getting picked for your club at 17 and playing for Manchester United, whereas when me and Jon made games it was like trying to get into the World Cup when you were Maori, it was that hard trying to make a Spectrum look like an arcade machine. If you can work for a company now that's got almost unlimited funds you could pretty much do anything; I'm sure that if Jon and myself worked for the people who made *Tomb Raider*, it would be four times as good, but unfortunately we don't.

What are you working on at the moment?

Jon: Doing some planning and thinking about small platforms such as the GBA. We were working on a cool 3D engine, but that's currently on hold and I'm now looking at texture mapping and lit poly engines. It's still in very early stages so there isn't a lot more I can tell you.

What happened to the arcade version of Match Day *you had planned for Rare?*

Jon: We finished the game and put it out in some test sites where, by chance, another arcade soccer game was being tested – they wiped the floor with us. On reflection I would say that I made some great home soccer games but the reason they worked so well was because of their depth and the length of the learning curve – there was always another trick to master. An arcade game needs to be easy to learn and be brilliant at on the very first play otherwise the player will not put another coin in the slot.

Bernie: Rare put out a half-finished version on display in an arcade in America and it was up against a *FIFA*-like game where you only had to knock the ball into the back of the net. It wasn't as good but ended up taking more money than ours.

Surely a GBA version of Head Over Heels *would be a great idea?*

Jon: *Head Over Heels'* copyright is held by others and I don't want to be held back by them.

▼ Not only would those batteries power your car, but you could drop them onto Bovver Bears and foil their furry plans.



Retro

PC Engine GT

Classic Machine

QUITE POSSIBLY ONE OF THE BEST HANDHELD CONSOLES EVER MADE

Retro regulars may already be aware of our love for NEC's fantastic PC Engine. Released in 1987, it's one of the most impressive consoles of its time, with many of its games still enjoyable today. It was also a technically accomplished beast that was all the more impressive because of its diminutive size. With the arrival of the Game Boy and Lynx in 1989, NEC was determined not to miss out on the rapidly expanding handheld market and set to work on its own portable marvel – the PC Engine GT.

When it launched in 1990, the PC Engine GT had one of the most impressive ranges of games for any new machine. How? NEC had ensured that the GT would be compatible with practically every previous (and future) PC Engine title. Straight away, lucky GT owners were able to sample the delights of *Alien Crush, PC Kid, Son Son II, Atomic Robo Kid, Gunhed, Dragon Spirit* and many more, with the machine immediately gaining a very strong following in Japan.

As with Atari's Lynx and Sega's Game Gear, NEC put a full colour screen and backlight in its handheld to really show off its games. In fact, the design of the GT's impressive screen was similar to the handheld TVs of the time and it even had its own cathode ray tube. What really set the machine apart from its peers, though, was the clarity of its dot matrix screen, and the fact that it hardly ever suffered from the motion blur that plagued its rivals. Of all the early colour handhelds (including Sega's impressive Nomad), the PC Engine GT's visuals still stand up well today.

Another nifty feature of the GT was its ability to be used as a portable television, although this only worked in NTSC regions. The TV tuner extension made a bulky machine even bigger, but once again proved just how advanced the unit was for its time and it was soon copied by Sega.

Of course, the GT was far from perfect and if you were able to overcome your initial awe at this technically amazing machine, there were a few flaws. The biggest problem was the GT's screen; it wasn't able to display the same resolution as the original PC Engine, so text and scores could be extremely hard to read. The Tri-format pixel layout also meant that scrolling titles would sometimes feature a strange shimmering effect. Still, in some ways the low resolution actually ended up helping certain titles, with games like *After Burner* and *Powerdrift* looking better than their large-screen counterparts.

Whichever way you looked at it, the GT was leagues ahead of the competition, so it was unsurprising that it was eventually launched in America. Unfortunately for NEC, the Turbo Express (as it was known in the US) found itself up against some stiff competition, and it wasn't helped by its $299 price tag that immediately put it out of reach of



CARD SHARP
The PC Engine GT's Hu-cards may have been tiny, but contained surprisingly complex games in their flimsy innards.

EYE EYE
This is one of the best handheld screens that we've seen – the fact it's recessed keeps it safe from knocks, but older GTs can have dead pixels.

SHOOT!
One very handy feature of the GT was the ability to use auto-fire. This made shoot-'em-ups much easier.



SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: HuC6280
PROCESSOR SPEED: 7.195090 MHz
SOUND: Stereo-capable, six channels
RAM: 64kb
DISPLAY: 2.6-inch backlit panel
RESOLUTION: 256 x 256 pixels
MAXIMUM SPRITES: 64
COLOR: 256 on-screen out of 512 palette
MEDIA: HuCard – TurboChip
POWER: Six AA batteries (150 mins)





Although it boasted an impressive collection of shoot-'em-ups, the PC Engine GT had a range of games. Its compatibility with the PC Engine ensured a steady stream of titles.

BUYER BEWARE

If you fancy picking up one of these beauties, be sure to pay great attention to the unit's condition. Sadly, time has not been kind to NEC's machine and you'll often find that screens suffer from a few dead pixels. Fortunately, scratches are normally kept to a minimum – NEC was smart enough to give the GT a recessed screen – but it never hurts to ask the seller to have a really close look. Another problem with the majority of GTs is that they often suffer from extremely quiet sound, although this is normally fine if using headphones. It always pays to find out as much as you can about a potential purchase, but in the case of the GT and Turbo Express, you need to be extra careful.

all but the most hardcore gamers. Add to this the limited number of games that had made it to the States and the Turbo Express found itself adrift. While it was possible to buy converters that enabled you to play Japanese imports, they tended to break easily and, nowadays, can be very expensive.

Despite its few niggles, both the PC Engine GT and (to a lesser extent) Turbo Express have become highly desirable collectors' pieces and you'll often find them on eBay. Like many classic machines, though, you can expect to pay a reasonable amount for the pleasure of owning one, especially if you're lucky enough to find one that's mint in the box. It might not have been as flawless as people remember, but in our minds the PC Engine GT still runs a very close second to the Game Boy Advance in the 'best handheld' stakes. Not bad for a system that's over 13 years old.

"WHY I LOVE MY PC ENGINE GT"

Sure, it was hideously expensive, but when you got that massive hunk of plastic in your hands it just felt so right. Even after all these years, it's still an amazing piece of kit and it's a great pity that it never performed as well as it could have. Just imagine what the GT could have achieved if it had the Sega or Nintendo name attached to it… It may eat batteries like there's no tomorrow (and it's not always easy to make out text) but as far as handhelds of yesteryear are concerned, the GT is king.

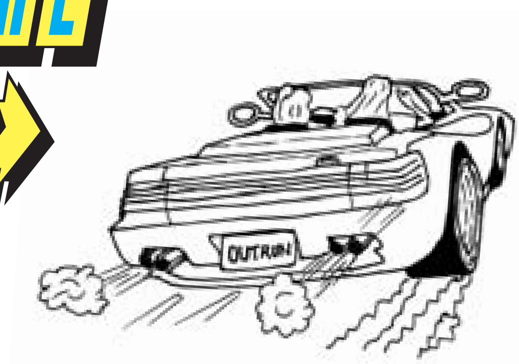
Darran Jones



Classic Machine

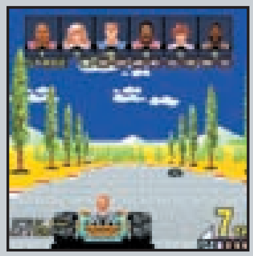


Six of the Best



ONE OF THE GREATEST BENEFITS OF THE PC ENGINE GT WAS THAT MANY OF THE GAMES LOOKED A LOT BETTER ON ITS SMALL SCREEN THAN THEY DID ON A STANDARD TV. IF YOU WANT PROOF, CHECK OUT THIS LOT

Power Drift



Developer: Asmic/Sega
Year: 1990

Play this on a PC Engine and it's hard to see what all the fuss is about. See it on the small screen, however, and *Power Drift* suddenly becomes one of the PC Engine's greatest racers. The visuals are incredibly sharp and vibrant, and this is a thorough conversion of Sega's fun (but by no means classic) racer. If you're looking for something a bit different, you really can't go wrong with *Power Drift*.

Kyukyoku Tiger



Developer: Taito
Year: 1989

Shmups are ten a penny on the PC Engine and while many gamers would choose *Gunhed*, *Dragon Spirit* and *Super Star Soldier*, *Kyukyoku Tiger* is well worth tracking down. Not only is it another superb conversion of a classic arcade game, it's also one of the finest Hu-card blasters available. Although the visuals are fairly basic, the hectic gameplay will really get your adrenaline going.

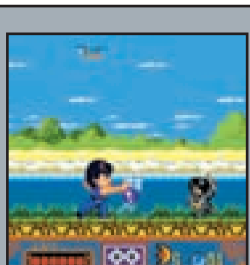
Devil Crash



Developer: Naxat Soft
Year: 1990

This is also an essential title for the PC Engine, but *Devil Crash* is just as good on the smaller GT. Visuals are incredibly crisp and you'll soon become totally absorbed as you try to achieve that all-important number-one placement. Like many fast-moving games, *Devil Crash* suffered from some slight motion blur, but if you were looking for one of the best handheld pinball games, this was the business.

Jackie Chan Action Kung Fu



Developer: Hudson Soft
Year: 1991

If you're a fan of Jackie Chan, or great platformers, you might want to check this out. Jackie looks fantastic as he fights through some glorious looking levels that are packed with enemies. There's a nice variety of platforming and fighting to keep fans of both genres happy and the difficulty curve is fair. You'd be lucky to find it for under £30, though.



OutRun

Developer: NEC Avenue/Sega
Year: 1990

Before the Saturn and Dreamcast versions arrived, this was by far the best conversion of *OutRun*. Despite missing a few features from its arcade parent (namely the water from Coconut Beach) this was a stunning racer and did the PC Engine proud. Once it was shrunk down to the GT's tiny screen, the game looked even better. The tiny screen often made it hard to read your score, but this was a small price to pay for being able to play a faithful conversion of Yu Suzuki's classic racer in the palm of your hand.

R-Type 1+2

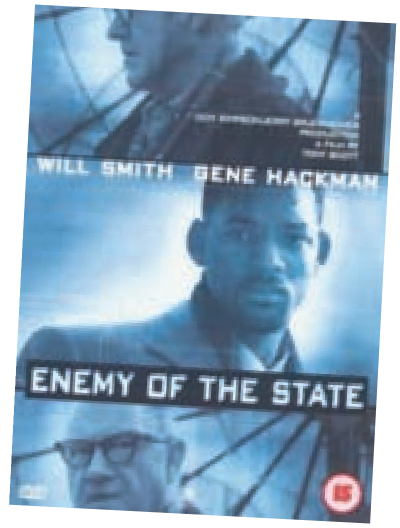
Developer: Hudson Soft/Irem
Year: 1988

R-Type is also a PC Engine must-have, but playing it on the GT is an utterly enjoyable experience. Considering the size of the display, there's no problem dodging bullets, and the many key elements (like the gigantic mothership) look better than ever. Although it's a pain that you need to buy two Hu cards to get the full *R-Type* experience, this really is a class blaster. While the Game Boy had its own impressive version of *R-Type*, you need to play this on a GT for a perfect handheld replica of the arcade experience.









▲ Kudos to Tony Scott for giving NEC's excellent handheld such a major role in such an average film. Where were the Oscar nominations?

STAR GAMES!

What's a snazzy little PC Engine GT doing in Enemy Of The State? Upstaging Will Smith and being better than a PlayStation, that's what

Picture the scene: your digital camcorder has just taken pictures of the cold-blooded murder of a congressman and a bunch of government heavies are trying to break into your home. Do you a) hand over the discriminating evidence (facing possible death); b) sell the tape to the highest bidder; or c) make a copy, hide the disk in the back of a totally incompatible PC Engine GT, drop it in one of Will Smith's shopping bags, then get run over by a bus? That's right, it's 'c'.

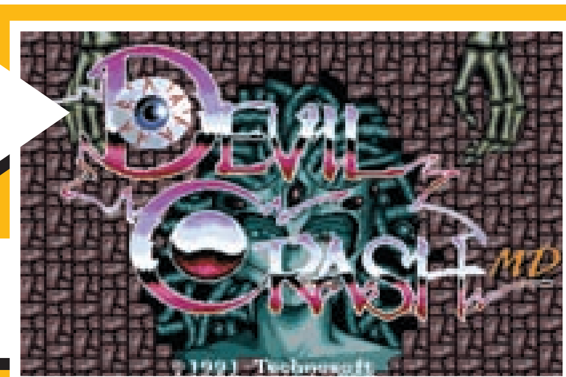
Despite the rather dubious plot hook, we were more than happy to see one of our favourite consoles get a well-deserved airing, especially in such good condition. The plucky handheld even managed to upstage Sony's PlayStation (Smith's son is playing on one when dad arrives home from work) and dominate every scene it was in. Sadly, after Smith retrieves the GT from his son and removes the important data stored within it, the machine doesn't reappear.

The biggest mystery, though, is where the console came from in the first place. GTs are just as rare in the US as they are over here and its excellent condition leads us to believe that this may well have belonged to someone on the crew. Rumours that it was actually Smith's and that he was spotted playing *King Of Casino* while on the toilet remain just that, rumours. Shame, really.

DON'T GO CHANGING

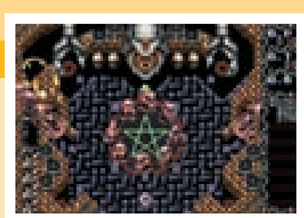
DEVIL CRASH

Western gamers always seem to get a bad deal, with 'the man' always trying to spoil Japanese games. Like Devil Crash…



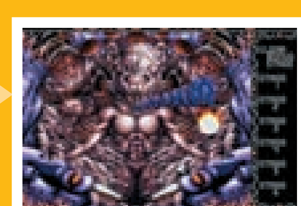
▲ Sometimes you have to be thankful for western sensibilities. Who knows how many young souls Satan could have claimed with this game…

It's not just violent beat-'em-ups that can undergo cosmetic changes to make them more suitable for our sanitised western market – apparently pinball can be problematic. After wowing gamers on the PC Engine, *Devil Crash* (the sequel to Naxat Soft's *Alien Crush*) arrived on the Mega Drive and was a firm favourite with Japanese and import gamers alike. But once this gothic-heavy pinball title was ready for its western release, worried publishers demanded a few changes to the game's content, just in case parents became outraged by the 'shocking' tables.



For a game that contained as much of a mystical theme as this one did, you would have thought that it would have received a complete overhaul in the visual department. Funnily enough, all it received was a name change and the removal of a few symbols. The Satanic-sounding *Devil Crash* was replaced by the bland *Dragon's Fury*, while the pentagrams from the original were turned into consumer-friendly stars.

While it's perhaps understandable why these changes were made, we still can't understand why so much of the game's original content remained intact. Here was a game that contained grinning skulls (that would raucously mock you whenever a ball was lost), chanting monks and beautiful maidens who transformed into hideous reptiles. And if the name got changed from *Devil Crash*, why did the game still contain plenty of pictures of things that looked like, er, devils?



ATARI LYNX



"WHY I LOVE MY ATARI LYNX"

While all my friends were buying Game Boys, I chose the lonely route of owning a Lynx. Sure, I was mocked when my trusty machine would run out of power, but I didn't care; I had *Klax, Blue Lightning, Electrocop* and fantastic power in the palm of my hand. Eventually, other Lynx owners were found and we'd gather like criminals to play the likes of *Rampage* and *Xenophobe* via ComLynx. It was painful when the software began to dry up and the Game Boy and Game Gear dominated the market, but my memories are worth their weight in Lynxes.

Darran Jones

LIKE SO MANY HANDHELDS, THE LYNX IS NOW REMEMBERED AS ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE GAME BOY'S SUCCESS. BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT...

The story of Atari's Lynx began in 1987 with a company called Epyx. Renowned for hit games like *Mission Impossible* and the *Games* series, Epyx had been hard at work on its colour-screen Handy handheld but lacked the financial backing to get the machine produced. Nintendo was invited to buy into the project, but declined (for reasons that are obvious now). Atari, however, was impressed by the Handy's power and saw it as a way to break back into the games market.

At the 1989 Summer CES, Atari's CEO showed off the machine, now renamed the Portable Color Entertainment System. Nintendo also announced its Game Boy in 1989 and comparisons were quickly drawn between the two machines. Although Atari's machine had a large colour screen, a nifty backlight and some extremely powerful hardware, the Game Boy was a lot more portable and had a much longer battery life.

Unperturbed, Atari launched its machine in America at the end of 1989. Due to limited quantities and its high price – at $199, it was almost twice the price of the Game Boy – the newly christened Lynx immediately

NOW THAT'S DIFFERENT

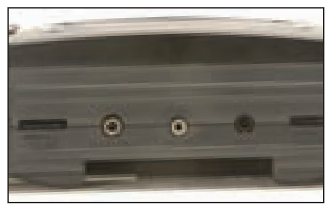
The Lynx had several innovative features that made it unique in the console market. It was possible to flip the machine and play it either left- or right-handed and you could turn it through 90 degrees in order to play vertical games. Perhaps the most impressive feature, however, was the ability to link up with up to seven other players via the ComLynx – but the chances of finding that many other Lynx owners were extremely slim. The Lynx was also intended to be compatible with Atari's Jaguar, much like the GBA is with the GameCube today. Sadly, as the Lynx's fortunes waned, so did Atari's and the feature was never implemented.



Classic Machine

SPECIFICATIONS

DIMENSIONS: 10.75″ x 4.25″ x 1.5″ (9.25″ x 4.25″ x 2″ for the Lynx II)
SCREEN: 3.5″ diagonal
PORTS: Headphones, ComLynx, power, game-card slot, battery holder
BATTERY POWER: Six AA batteries
CUSTOM CHIP1: Mikey 16-bit custom CMOS chip running at 16 MHz
PROCESSOR: MOS 65C02 processor running at around 3.6 MHz
COLOUR PALETTE: 4,096 colours (16 simultaneous colours per scanline), 512 bytes of bootstrap and game-card loading ROM
CUSTOM CHIP2: Suzy (16-bit custom CMOS chip running at 16 MHz)
GRAPHICS ENGINE: Hardware drawing support, high-speed sprite scaling, distortion and tilting effects, clipping and multidirectional scrolling, variable frame rate (up to 75 fps)
STANDARD RESOLUTION: 160 x 102 'Triad' resolution
DRAM: 64K
CARD STORAGE: 128k, 256k or 512k of ROM



BUTTONS

The Lynx's unique button layout meant the unit could be played left- or right-handed simply by flipping the machine over.

THE EVER-EVOLVING CARTRIDGE

If there was one thing that was a real pain with the Lynx, it was the cards on which the games were stored. Initially, they were a bugger to pull loose from the machine because there wasn't anything to hold on to. Fortunately, only the five launch games suffered and the next step was for Atari to introduce the Ridge. While slightly better, it was still far from perfect and eventually Atari developed the Curved Lip, which became the standard. Later homebrew titles used different styles again (with varying degrees of success), but our money will always be on the Curved Lip.

suffered in the first handheld war. Things picked up for Atari in 1990, though, and a host of great arcade conversions soon appeared. The likes of *Ms Pac-Man*, *Klax*, *Paperboy* and *Rampage* were just a few of the titles available and the majority of the conversions were very faithful.

One of Atari's biggest problems, however, was its own name. Because of the videogame crash of the early Eighties, many shops were reluctant to take on an Atari machine; the fact that there were no triple-A titles for the machine also hurt its image. The continued success of the Game Boy, not to mention the Lynx's lack of third-party support, meant Atari was having a tough time competing with Nintendo. In 1991, however, the Lynx began to hit its stride and the great games kept coming. *APB*, *STUN Runner*, *Ninja Gaiden* and *Robotron 2084* graced the handheld and a massively improved marketing campaign helped drive sales. It may have suffered an incredibly short battery life, cheap workmanship (instead of using grey plastic, Atari simply painted white plastic grey) and a rather bulky size, but the Lynx's improved power was winning it a lot of friends.

Then in May 1991, Sega entered the market with its Game Gear and the Lynx took another hit. Atari fought back and relaunched the Lynx (the Lynx II) in a new, sleeker form. There were now rubber grips to make the unit more comfortable to hold, the backlight had a power-save function and the screen was much clearer; it was a massive improvement. Sadly, Atari couldn't compete with the sheer amount of software that Sega and Nintendo had in their back catalogues and by the end of 1992, sales of the machine began to dip again. By 1995, the Lynx was all but dead – even Atari had abandoned it in favour of the Jaguar.

Fortunately, the Lynx is far from defunct, as various companies (such as Duranik and Songbird Productions) still make games for the machine. It might not have been the success that Atari so desperately wanted, but the Lynx still managed to bless us with plenty of happy memories.

ATARI LYNX


AMERICAN COURSE
PRESS A TO VISIT CLUB HOUSE
DANGER
RADAR
STROKE : 1
PLAYER :01 MASTER
TIME LEFT:
SCORE : 0
LEVEL 001
TIME 088
CHIPS LEFT : 010

Classic Machine

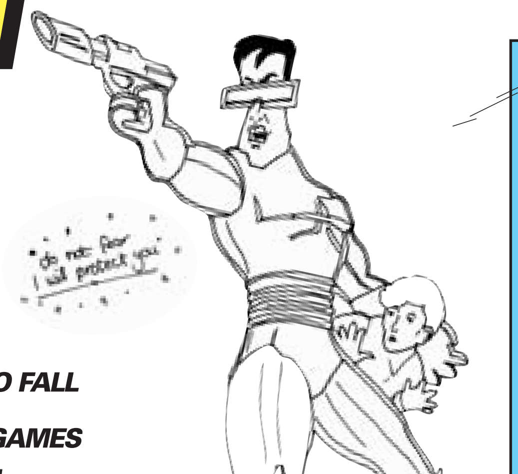
B

A

POWER



SIX OF THE BEST



IT WAS ONE OF THE FIRST HANDHELDS TO FALL TO THE MIGHTY GAME BOY, BUT THE ATARI LYNX STILL HAD SOME AMAZING GAMES

California Games

Publisher: Atari
Year: 1989

There may have been a few events missing, but this was still a great title and the perfect giveaway for early Lynx adopters. You could choose from four events – Surfing, Footbag, BMX and Half-Pipe – and all were great fun. There were plenty of graphical tricks to show off the Lynx's power and it was even possible to link up with other players. Music was generally very good and each event played like a dream.



STUN Runner



Publisher: Atari
Year: 1991

When Atari announced that *STUN Runner* would appear on the Lynx, cynics thought the notion ridiculous. As it turned out, Atari had the last laugh and delivered a hectic racer that was an incredibly accurate conversion (considering the Lynx's limitations). Like *Klax*, *STUN Runner* had masses of digitised speech; combined with the blisteringly fast graphics and sublime gameplay, it made for another classy Lynx title. Forget the hideous Atari ST port – this was the definitive home version.

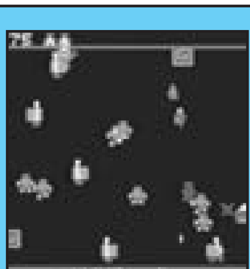
Blue Lightning

Publisher: Atari
Year: 1989

An early launch title, *Blue Lightning* really showed off the Lynx's sprite-scaling capabilities and was a superb blaster that was a world away from the many Game Boy titles that were available at the time. While fairly limited, the *Top Gun*-esque gameplay was engrossing and there were plenty of missions to keep you busy. Many Lynx owners bought this stunning looking title when it came out, so it's now very easy to find.

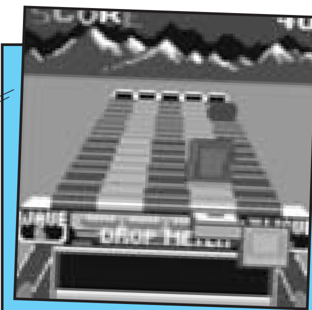


Robotron 2084



Publisher: Williams
Year: 1991

Okay, so the dual joysticks of the original arcade game were a no go, but *Robotron 2084* is still an excellent title. Using the Lynx's main face buttons, it was possible to rotate your fire in either direction to shoot the game's many enemies. Granted, it wasn't as slick or responsive as the arcade original, but you were too busy dodging and blasting to care. Frustratingly tricky to get hold of now, this is still worth tracking down.



Klax

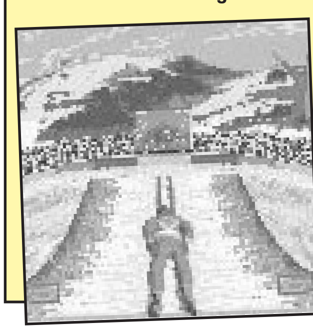
Publisher: Atari
Year: 1990

Every handheld needs a good puzzle game and the Lynx was adequately catered for with the excellent *Klax*. Taking an extremely simple concept – grab falling coloured tiles then dump them into groups of three or more – *Klax* was fiendishly addictive. What made it stand out, though, were the fantastic graphics and great stereo sound. Every digitised sound from the arcade game had been accurately ported to the Lynx, which added bags of atmosphere to an already wonderful game.

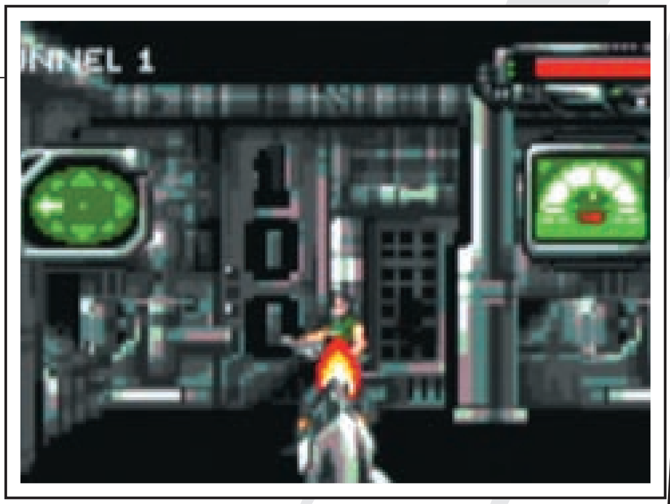
Alpine Games

Publisher: Duranik
Year: 2004

If you thought *STUN Runner* and *Blue Lightning* showed the Lynx off to the best of its abilities, you might want to check out *Alpine Games*. With some wonderfully smooth scaling and fantastic animation, this is one of the finest-looking Lynx titles available. The gameplay is just as good and with nine events, you'll be hammering away at this for some time. The ability to save high scores without the need for a code is also refreshing.

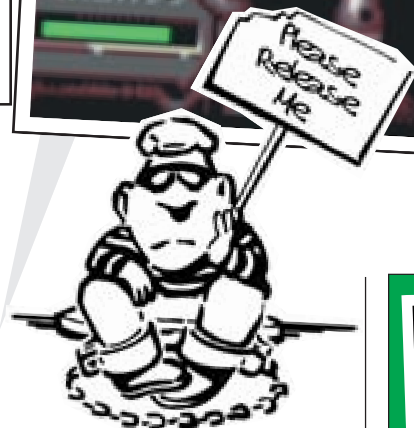


▼ Yes, that *is* a Marine you're shooting at; no, you don't get to see Sigourney Weaver in her pants.



▼ Look – there's nothing wrong with this game (well, 'weaponary' aside), so why did it never get released, eh?





ALIEN VS PREDATOR

Digging up the titles that never made it as far as your local game store

Format: Lynx
Release: N/A
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Rebellion

Some things, it would seem, are doomed to failure, with a classic example being Atari's Lynx. It might have been technologically ahead of its time but a lack of third-party support, a hopelessly short battery life, and the machine's sheer size soon saw Atari's handheld trailing behind both Sega's Game Gear and Nintendo's perennial Game Boy.

But Atari wasn't willing to give up the fight, so it set Rebellion to work on a Lynx conversion of its impressive Jaguar title *Alien Vs Predator*. Thanks to the Lynx's rotation capabilities and hardware scaling, Rebellion planned to recreate a portable version of one of the Jaguar's biggest hits and quickly went to work.

Unfortunately, despite nearing completion (EEPROM carts of a supposedly near-finished version of the game were produced), one of the most impressive looking Lynx titles never got as far as the high street. It looked like Rebellion's game was going to remain in development hell and become another gaming 'what if'…

However, like the xenomorphic foes on which the game was based, Rebellion's lost title wasn't prepared to leave quietly and *Alien Vs Predator* eventually appeared in ROM form on various websites.

Although there were plenty of problems with the code, it was easy to see that Rebellion and Atari would have had a hit on their hands had the game actually seen the light of day. The smooth, block-scrolling, bitmap-designed levels were extremely convincing and moved along at an impressive rate, helping to create a very claustrophobic atmosphere.

Sound, on the other hand, while being faithful to the original Jaguar music, seemed rather out of place on the handheld machine and greatly diminished the atmosphere that the game's impressive graphics engine had created.

Although a playable Alien wasn't available in the preview code, players were able to gain access to either a Marine or a Predator. The first few missions consisted of simply collecting a certain number of bombs and getting them to the relevant checkpoint (although we still haven't been able to get off the first Predator stage), but they soon got increasingly tougher thanks to the mind-bending mazes you had to negotiate.

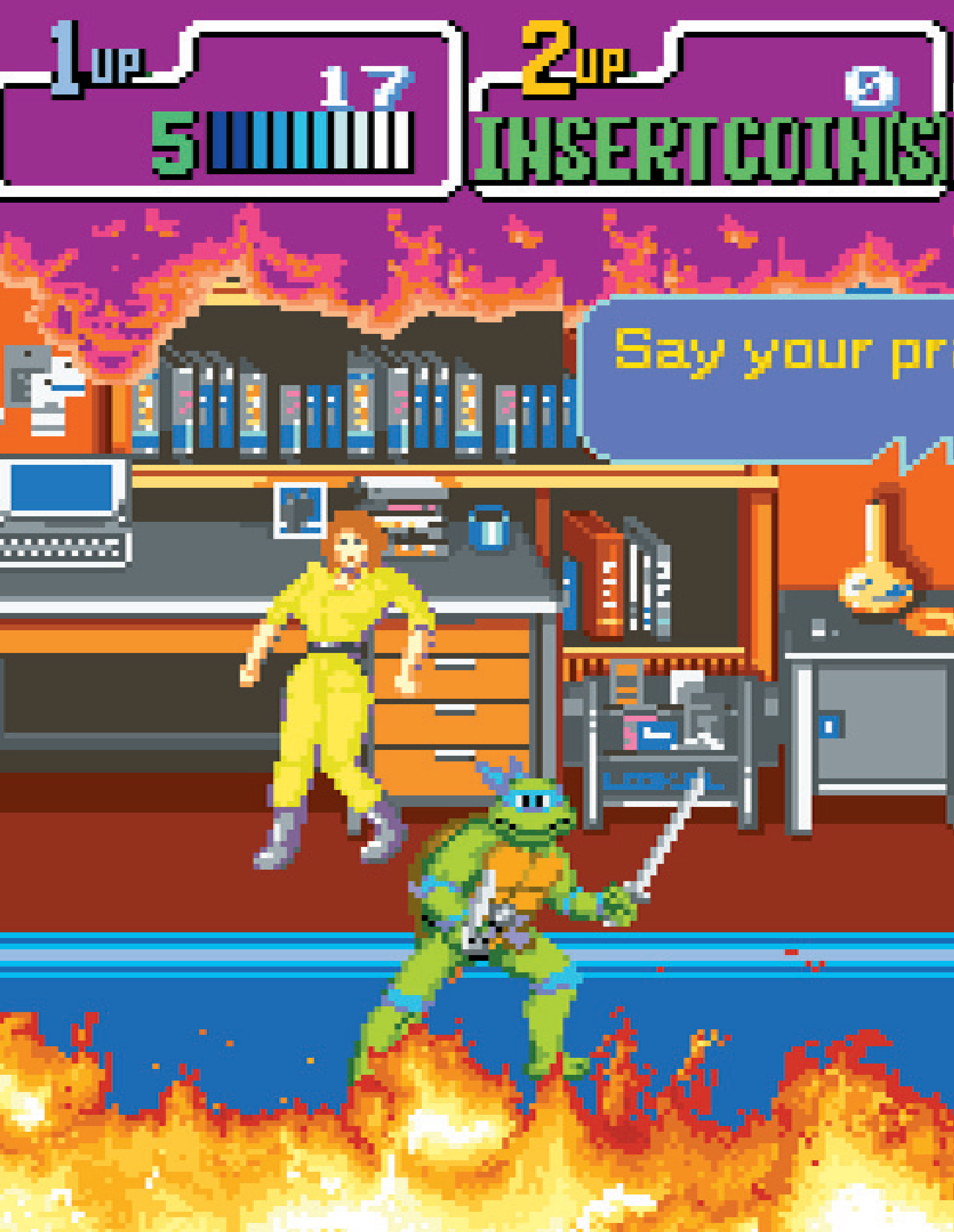
Sure, there were a few things that definitely needed changing (many enemies wouldn't die when hit, and your foes seemed to consist of nothing more than Marines regardless of which side you were on), but even the briefest of plays revealed just how ahead of its peers the Lynx was. It's a crying shame that *Alien Vs Predator* never got the commercial release it so obviously deserved. There's just no justice in the world.



ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

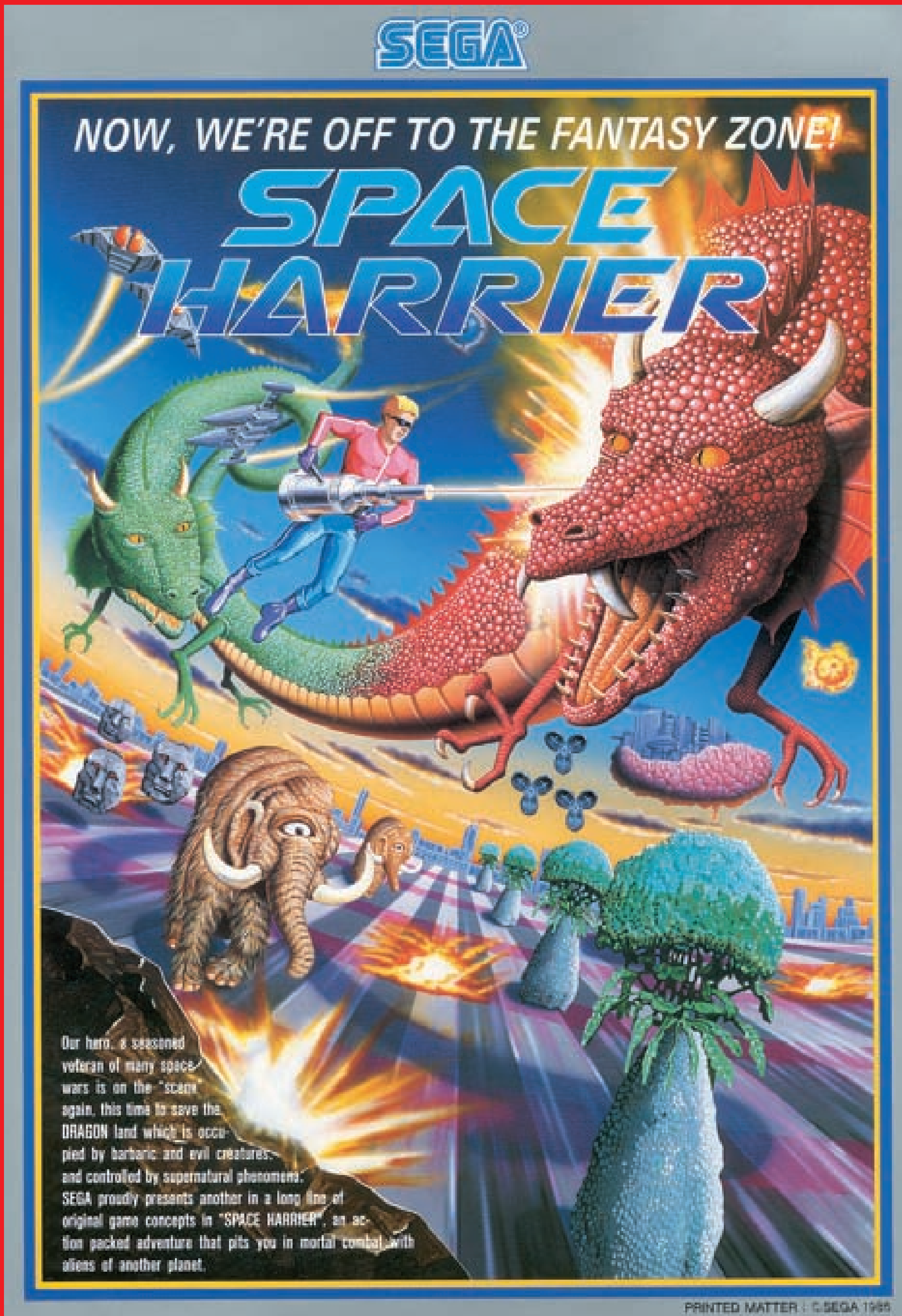
The concept of Alien Vs Predator appeared in 1990 when Dark Horse's comic-book author Randy Stradley thought it would be a great idea if Predators decided to hunt Aliens. Since then, several games have appeared on various formats and have included such highlights as the excellent Capcom beat-'em-up, the technically impressive (for its time) Jaguar version and the superb PC series (also developed by Rebellion).

There have been several low points for the franchise; the less said about *Alien Vs Predator: Extinction* the better. In 2004 we saw the Xenomorph and his invisible chum go back to their big-screen roots in the 'blockbuster' *Alien Vs Predator*. Sadly, chucking two of cinema's favourite alien life-forms into a movie doesn't make it any good, and the film was poorly received. There's still time for a tie-in game, mind…


1UP
17
5
2UP
9
INSERT COIN(S)
Say your pr



Cowabunga, dude **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – Arcade [Konami] 1989**



SPACE HARRIER (Arcade) Sega, 1985 – Original Arcade Flyer

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Arcades

For many gamers, smoky arcades hold many of their fondest childhood memories. From playing *Pong* to blasting the hell out of *Space Invaders*, many of the greatest games originated from the arcade scene. *OutRun*, *R-Type*, *Pac-Man*, *Bubble Bobble*, *Mr. Do*… it's a seemingly endless list that makes your head spin.

Your mum may have thought that it was filled with unsavoury individuals and dodgy goings-on (and some of them were) but there's little doubt that the arcade was the place to be if you had a bit of pocket money in your back pocket and fancied playing the latest games before they appeared on the home machines (if at all). Of course, the main advantage of playing the original arcade games was that home machines didn't have a hope of successfully emulating them, especially if you were the owner of a Spectrum or Commodore 64.

As the years progressed, though, the arrival of the 16-bit machines saw the home machines rapidly catching up with their arcade peers and by the time the Neo Geo AES arrived arcade-perfect conversions soon became a reality. These perfect conversions continued with the arrival of the Saturn, PlayStation and Dreamcast and the arcade market began to change – sadly, it wasn't for the better…





NEO ARCADE

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU (Central Processing Unit): 16-bit Motorola 68000
CPU Speed: 12MHz
Microprocessor: 8-bit Zilog-80A
Microprocessor Speed: 4MHz
Memory: Main RAM (Random Access Memory): 64KB
Video RAM: 68KB
Z80 RAM: 2KB
Resolution: 320 x 224
Sprites: Maximum Number Of Sprites On-Screen: 380
Maximum Sprite Size: 16 x 512 pixels
Minimum Sprite Size: 1 x 2 pixels
Maximum Amount Of Game Planes: 3
Colour: Colours Available: 65,536
Maximum Colours Displayed At Once: 4,096
Sound: Four Frequency Modulator (FM) Synthesis Channels, seven Digital Internal Channels, three Programmable Sound Generator (PSG) Channels and one Noise Channel

FOR MANY GAMERS THE 16-BIT ERA OFFERED SOME OF THE GREATEST GAMING EXPERIENCES TO DATE. FROM SUPER MARIO KART TO STREET FIGHTER II TURBO, SONIC THE HEDGEHOG TO FIFA 95, THE BATTLE BETWEEN NINTENDO AND SEGA WAS AN EPIC ONE THAT SPAWNED DOZENS OF CLASSIC TITLES. HOWEVER, THERE WAS A THIRD CONSOLE IN THIS RACE, AND IT WAS BY FAR THE MOST POWERFUL OF THE THREE



▶ Do bigger cartridges mean better games? In the case of *Samurai Shodown*, yes.

During the early Nineties, while gamers argued over a blue hedgehog and an Italian plumber, the hardest of the hardcore game fans were having their own argument – was Terry or Andy Bogard the stronger of the two brothers? If you have no idea what we're talking about (which is likely if you're younger than 20 or older than 30), then the chances are you're not familiar with SNK's *Fatal Fury* (yep, that's SNK as in *SNK Vs Capcom*). Similar in style to *Street Fighter II*, the game was a one-on-one beat-'em-up featuring a cast of just three selectable characters – not a lot next to the likes of *Tekken* or *Virtua Fighter*, but still a healthy number in those days.

It's also fairly likely that if you ever got round to playing *Fatal Fury*, it was one the conversions that appeared later – the SNES, Mega Drive and even the Sharp X68000 all received competent, though severely cut-down, versions of the game. On the other hand, you may be finding us incredibly patronising, in which case you were probably one of the aforementioned 'hardest hardcore' gamers that didn't really give a toss if Mario or Sonic was the best. If so, you probably either owned a Neo-Geo, or are at least aware of the console's existence.

SNK's Neo-Geo Arcade Entertainment System (AES) was released on a rental-only basis in 1990, before becoming available to buy later that year. Based on the company's powerful 16-bit Neo-Geo Multi Video System (MVS) that had been released in the arcades a year earlier, the console was initially packaged with two four-button arcade joysticks and branded as Neo-Geo Gold. With a choice of either *NAM-1975* or *Baseball Stars Pro* included in the pack, the Neo-Geo Gold launched at a recommended retail price of $699 (£440) – vastly expensive, though actually quite a bargain considering that this was a cutting-edge arcade machine in a tidy plastic box.

However, while the machine itself was just about affordable for avid arcade players with a disposable income, the games were another story. Because of the enormous sprites and complex level of animation the hardware was capable of handling, the amount of memory required to store such imagery on cartridge

-GEO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM



was astronomical. Ranging from 46Megs up to over 700 in some of the later titles (compared to 16Megs for SNES *Street Fighter II*), the costs involved with manufacturing such monstrous carts meant that Neo-Geo games cost upwards of $200 (£130) each.

As you'd expect, these sorts of prices meant that the Neo-Geo was only ever embraced by a small (and usually very rich) sector of the games industry, even in Europe where the system was officially released, though poorly distributed by SNK Europe Ltd.

As few stores stocked the machine (even specialist retailers struggled to find suppliers), the Neo-Geo AES was predictably downtrodden by the SNES and Mega Drive in terms of sales. Even so, the machine has gone on to be one of the longest supported home consoles in history – even now at 14 years old, new instalments of the most popular franchises continue to be released for the virtually antique system. On top of that, many of the rarer games have become highly collectable, with some titles fetching over £1,000. Start saving…

LET THERE BE LIGHT
The games that led the way



MAGICIAN LORD

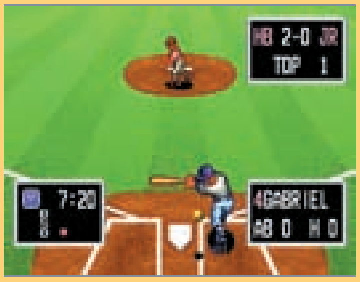
Publisher: **SNK**
Developer: **Alpha Denshi**

Although this was essentially a run-and-jump platformer, *Magician Lord* ably demonstrated the graphical abilities of SNK's new technology. The game featured a wizard named Elta who was faced with the tricky task of recovering eight books of wisdom from the clutches of Az Atorse, the god of destruction. Of course, being a wizard, Elta had the ability to change form (providing he collected the correct power-ups), but even so, the game was impossibly hard.

BASEBALL STARS PROFESSIONAL

Publisher: **SNK**
Developer: **In-House**

Following on from *Baseball Stars*, the SNK-developed sports title that had been released on the NES and in the arcades in 1989, *Baseball Stars Professional* introduced a vivid cartoon-style look to the series. This was one of the first three titles to appear on both the arcade MVS and home AES Neo-Geo platforms, and although it was hardly a must-have purchase, the visuals alone were enough to convince people that SNK's console was a tidy piece of kit.





▲ Similar in style to Red Corporation's *Cabal*, many gamers consider *NAM-1975* to be the superior title.

NAM-1975

Publisher: **SNK**
Developer: **In-House**

Considered to be a classic, *NAM-1975* initially disappointed some gamers because of its decidedly average visuals. However, those who stuck with the game soon discovered a solid, highly playable shoot-'em-up, featuring a terrific soundtrack and decent atmosphere. Like many of SNK's releases, *NAM-1975* wasn't the easiest game in the world, though the somewhat simplistic visuals meant that at least most of what went on was clear and concise.

NEO-GEO

ARCADE ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM



THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

SNK INTRODUCES THE MEMORY CARD, AHEAD OF SONY

One of the many underrated and often overlooked features of the Neo-Geo is the memory card slot on the front right-hand side of the machine.

Just like with the PlayStation (and every other console since Sony's ingenious invention [sic]), memory cards were used for saving gameplay data (mostly high scores in those days) without the need for battery backed-up cartridges.

On top of that, the cards were also compatible with Neo-Geo MVS cabinets in the arcades, much like Sega's Dreamcast/Naomi Visual Memory Units (VMU), meaning that data could easily be transferred between the two different formats.

COMPACT DISC

CUT-PRICE GAMES, ADDED LOADING TIMES

In 1994, SNK managed to reduce the price of its Neo-Geo games by releasing a new version of its AES console that featured a single-speed CD drive, rather than a cartridge slot. Simply called the Neo-Geo CD, the system launched with a front-loading disc tray, though problems with reliability and high manufacture costs forced the company to amend the design a few months later. The new look Neo-Geo CD was a simple top-loader, and while this simplified version fixed the problems of the original design, it still had one major drawback – loading times.

This was partly to do with the fact that the single-speed CD-Rom drive simply wasn't up to the job, but also because of the memory-intensive nature of the sprite-based games. In order to load the massive amounts of data required for games such as *Metal Slug*, the system included a massive 7Mb of on-board Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM) for the data to be loaded into (the original PlayStation had just 2.5Mb, to give you some idea of how much we're talking about). Of course, reading 7Mb of information with a single-speed drive was a time-consuming process, and games would regularly take well over a minute to load each chunk. The wait was eased a little with a simple animated juggling monkey, but even we got sick of the sight of him eventually.

Again, SNK was forced to change the design of its CD system, and this time almost got it right with the double-speed Neo-Geo CDZ. Unfortunately, the machine was virtually overlooked next to the likes of the PlayStation, and only a handful were ever sold. As a final kick in the teeth for SNK (which was now beginning to struggle financially), it would soon be discovered that the new system was prone to breaking down. On top of that, some of the later games featured cut-down animation in order to fit into the hardware's 7Mb of DRAM, while others simply wouldn't be ported in the first place.

Despite these issues, both the Neo-Geo CD and the Neo-Geo CDZ did have a couple of things going in their favour, the most obvious being the price of the games. At just $50 (£32) a pop, gamers wishing to play SNK's highly-acclaimed arcade titles could now pick them up for roughly a quarter of the price of the standard cartridge versions. Thanks to the CD-Rom technology, the games had improved sound quality and the machine could play regular music CDs.



▲ Only ever released in Japan, SNK's *Samurai Spirits* RPG didn't make it to the cartridge system.

ADDITIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

Sound Processor: Yamaha 2610
Sound Channels: 13
Memory: 7MB DRAM (Dynamic Random Access Memory)



TOP NEO-GEO TITLES

THE LAST 14 YEARS HAVE SEEN MANY SUPERB GAMES COMING OUT OF THE SNK (AND NOW PLAYMORE) OFFICES. TAKE A LOOK AT THESE BEAUTIES…

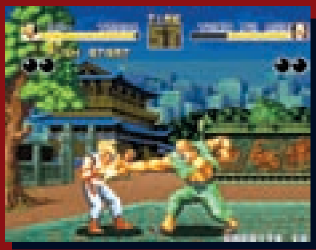
FATAL FURY

Launched in 1991 (the same year as *Street Fighter II*), SNK's *Fatal Fury* was, for many, the first reason to buy a Neo-Geo console. Featuring three selectable characters – Terry, Andy and Joe – the game boasted a range of special attacks and, though much of what was on offer seemed more basic than *Street Fighter II*, both games found their place side by side in the arcades. One unique feature that this title had was two planes of battle – characters could jump into and out of the backgrounds, making play that little bit more strategic. Sadly, this wasn't overly popular with players and was removed from later instalments in the series.

Of course, no one could have predicted that 13 years later such abilities would be commonplace in beat-'em-ups, thanks to the introduction of polygons. Funnily enough, the feature still isn't overly popular with some gamers, but then neither are 3D fighting games in general.



▲ *Street Fighter II* may have been the prettier of the two titles, but *Fatal Fury* was arguably more stylish.



▲ As well as two planes to fight on, bouts also took place at different times of the day.

SAMURAI SHODOWN





▲ While many of *Samurai Shodown*'s characters were Japanese, western influences were also included.

If you're unfamiliar with *Samurai Shodown* then the game may well look much like any other 2D beat-'em-up. However, its importance in the grand scheme of things is far more relevant than you might imagine. If the game had not existed, we may never have seen the likes of *Soul Blade* or *Soul Calibur*. You see, this weapon-based fighter was realised with such aplomb that it's gone on to influence just about every other similar title since its release in 1993. Featuring 13 diverse and vividly designed fighters (12 selectable plus one boss), the game managed to achieve a level of beauty and elegance beyond pretty much every other fighting game that had gone before it. Thanks to the scaling abilities of the Neo-Geo hardware, the entire screen would zoom in and out depending on how far apart the fighters were, creating a dynamic and highly absorbing experience. Three sequels and many conversions have subsequently been released.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS

Bringing together the characters from *Fatal Fury* and *Art Of Fighting*, *The King Of Fighters* series proved that SNK was, and indeed still is, the, er, king of fighters. First introduced in 1994, the games took the best elements from all of SNK's other beat-'em-ups (along with a few of Capcom's) and fused them together in a gritty brawler with a slightly more realistic edge to it. Each level was presented with an artsy cut-scene, usually utilising at least one of the Neo-Geo's many graphical abilities, giving the game an unprecedented level of polish and front-end presentation. Best of all, each player chose not one but three fighters that were used in succession (once one was knocked out, the next would take their place in the following round), which made the game quite unlike anything else. Other titles have borrowed this system since, of course, though few have done it as stylishly as SNK did ten years ago, and continues to do today.



▲ Taking all the best elements from SNK's previous games, *KOF* was an instant hit with the fans.



▲ Although still not as well known as Chun-Li or Guile, SNK's characters are popular with gamers.

METAL SLUG





▲ Typically difficult, *Metal Slug* was certainly a money-spinner for SNK, which was struggling at the time.

Now one of the better-known Neo-Geo series, *Metal Slug* has been translated to numerous consoles over the years, including the Saturn and PlayStation (though the latter suffered from hideous loading times at various points during the levels).

In fact, *Metal Slug 3* is now available on both the PlayStation2 and Xbox, and is well worth checking out. In case you're not familiar with the series, *Metal Slug* was a scrolling arcade action game that mixed platform and shoot-'em-up elements in a frenzy of bullets, missiles and flying debris.

Featuring some of the most impressive animation ever likely in a 2D game (the *Metal Slug 3* cartridge weighed in at a massive 708Megs to accommodate all the frames), along with a decent two-player simultaneous mode, *Metal Slug* is undoubtedly one of the finest series to come from SNK.

SNK Neo-Geo



Classic Machine





Time to put the pedal to the metal… **OutRun – Arcade [Sega] 1986**

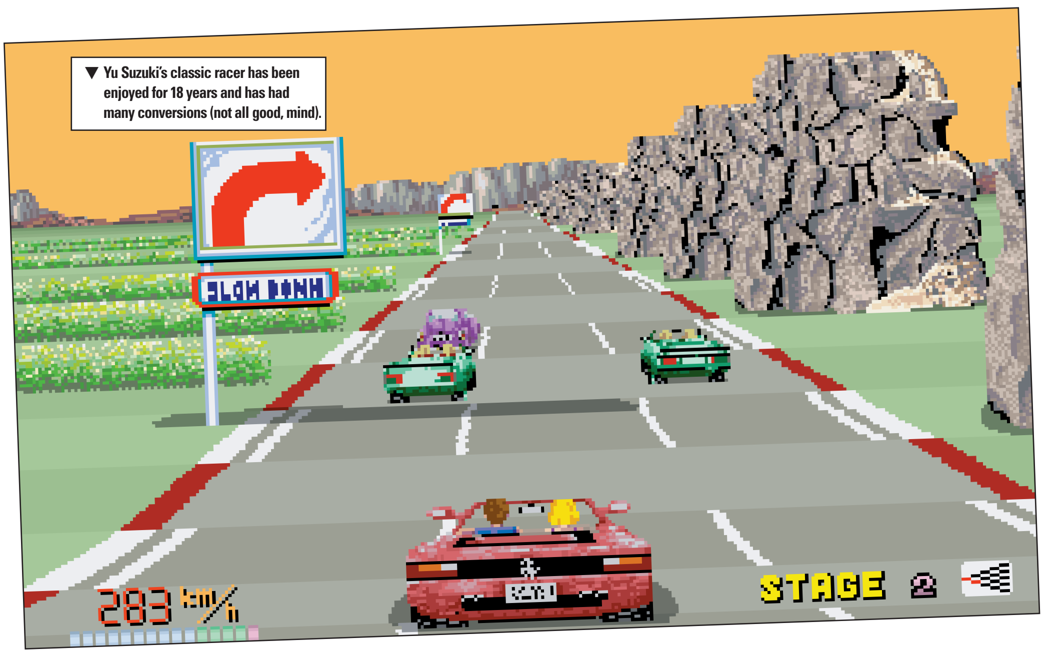

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ART
STAGE 1

OutRun

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

WHEN YU SUZUKI'S REVOLUTIONARY OUTRUN APPEARED IN 1986, IT HERALDED A NEW AGE FOR ARCADE RACERS. FROM THE MOMENT YOU DROPPED IN YOUR FIRST COIN AND HEARD THE SOUND OF YOUR CREDIT BEING REGISTERED, YOU KNEW YOU WERE IN FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL…

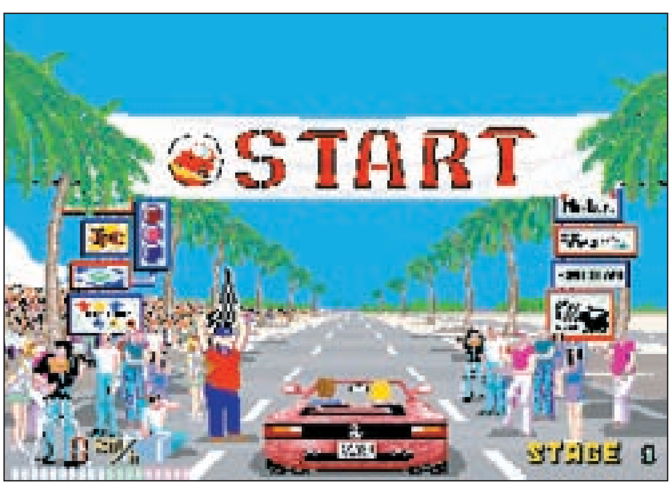
Format: **Arcade**
Release: **1986**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **In-House**



▼ Yu Suzuki's classic racer has been enjoyed for 18 years and has had many conversions (not all good, mind).

Press the start button and you'd be presented with a radio and a choice of three different soundtracks to listen to as you raced. Fantastic music filled your ears; your gleaming Ferrari Testarossa pulled up to the starting line and began roaring in anticipation, and your heart began to pound with excitement. Before you could even get a good look at the cute blonde sitting next to your driver, the countdown had finished and you were off on the ride of your life…

Compared to other racers of the time, the pace of *Out Run* was incredible. Helped along by Sega's superb sprite-scaling techniques (which were first seen a year earlier in *Space Harrier*), the sense of speed was fantastic and at times it often felt overwhelming. Your



▲ *OutRun*'s starting line, with its packed crowd and super-bright colours, is one of the most iconic in videogames.



▲ Like *Space Harrier* before it, *OutRun*'s levels were sickeningly fast. A cool head was a necessity.

Testarossa handled superbly and if you were lucky enough to be playing in the deluxe hydraulic cabinet, you felt every sharp turn and gut-wrenching undulation of each stretch of road.

As great as *OutRun*'s driving experience was, though, it was just as exciting to explore the game's many levels and simply take in the gloriously vibrant visuals. Using a unique branching system, each stretch of tarmac that you drove down eventually split off into two paths. This continued for four stages until you finally arrived at one of five different destinations, meaning that the game contained an impressive total of 15 different locations to drive through.

Featuring exotic-sounding names like Lakeside, Death Valley and Desolation Hill, there was as much variety in *OutRun*'s locations as there were stages. Starting off in the gloriously sunny Coconut Beach, you were soon speeding past a sumptuous looking beach (complete with a bevy of windsurfers) and hammering past road signs, palm trees and

THAT'S A CONVERSION?

When US Gold announced that *OutRun* would be appearing on home computers, the gaming world was ecstatic. Excessively hyped and rushed out for a Christmas release, it was perhaps unsurprising that *OutRun* disappointed so many people when it eventually appeared. All the 8-bit conversions were incredibly poor (the C64 version was the best of the bunch) and their 16-bit cousins fared little better (the Amiga version even had a bizarre bug that switched the driver's position when you turned corners). Most console iterations also suffered in the transition from the arcade and it's only really the PC Engine, Saturn and Dreamcast versions that successfully capture the spirit of the original game.







▲ *OutRun* was full of mind-twisting turns; take a corner at the wrong speed and you'd witness a spectacular crash.

gaudy holiday shacks. Devil's Canyon featured massive granite rocks that towered on either side of the road, while Cloudy Mountain saw you tearing down a dappled road that was blanketed by a thick layer of cloud. Each stage was fantastically detailed, had a huge amount of on-screen sprites, and moved quite unlike any other game before it.

Add in the vibrant visuals, superb sound and scorching gameplay and it's incredible to think that *OutRun* was completed in just nine months. Just like *Space Harrier* before it, *OutRun* was able to throw a massive amount of sprites around on screen at any one time (128 if needed) and it wasn't unusual to find yourself jostling three or four other cars while avoiding the many objects that littered the sides of the roads on later stages.

Inevitably, you would crash at some point, and once the impact occurred your Testarossa would go flying through the air, spilling its occupants like popcorn. Of course, a crash as dramatic as this would cause you to lose precious seconds. Should you clip another car, you'd find yourself spinning to a stop and receiving an angry telling off (complete with frantic finger wagging) from your passenger.

For many, it is *OutRun*'s superlative soundtrack that is so fondly remembered (we still hum it to this day). The three main tunes – *Splash Wave*, *Passing Breeze* and *Magical Sound Shower* – were incredibly upbeat and seemed to go on for ages before they looped back to the beginning. Unlike other titles of the time, *OutRun*'s music perfectly captured the hedonism of the Eighties and delivered toe-tapping beats – with a funky calypso background – that endure to this day. *Magical Sound Shower* is undoubtedly the most popular track on *OutRun*'s radio, but special mention has to go to the delightfully dreamy *Last Wave* that played during the 'Game Over' screen.

Perhaps the biggest testament to *OutRun*'s success, though, is the amount of time it has taken Yu Suzuki to return to his classic and create a true sequel.
Although numerous follow-ups appeared, including *Turbo OutRun*, *OutRun Europa* and *OutRunners*, none really came close to the majesty of the original game and, like the many home versions, proved a bitter disappointment to most fans. While a new generation of gamers are now able to enjoy an updated realisation of Suzuki's wondrous game, to us the original *OutRun* will always be king of the road.



KEEP ON (OUT) RUNNING

With *OutRun* becoming such a success, it was inevitable that Sega would revisit the franchise; what is surprising, however, is the amount of time it has taken Yu Suzuki to go back to his classic game. *OutRun 2* has only appeared in arcades fairly recently , but has once again captured all the magic that made the original title so great. While it features the same branching structure as *OutRun*, Sega AM2 has added further features to ensure that today's gamers will have plenty to keep them occupied.

The Xbox version takes things even further by offering a range of challenges and online play, meaning you can now take your Ferrari out for a spin with friends around the world.



Presentation: Gorgeous front end that fills you with excitement	**91%**
Graphics Sickeningly fast and beautiful to boot	**96%**
Sound Three glorious tunes that perfectly capture that summer vibe	**97%**
Gameplay Sublime handling and plenty of innovation	**95%**
Longevity Many routes mean it will be ages before you see every ending	**90%**
OVERALL	**96%**

COIN-OP DRIVING GAMES FAMILY TREE

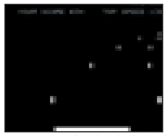
Gamers' obsessions with driving simulations can be traced back to the Forties, when mechanical games such as Drive Mobile (manufactured by International Mutoscope Company) appeared in amusement halls. These machines eventually evolved into what became known as electromagnetic games – these offered a more advanced (but still, by today's standards, archaic) driving experience. By the mid-Seventies, coin-operated games in arcades were evolving yet again and soon the advance of videogame technology heralded a new era of arcade driving titles. We trace the history of this massively popular genre.

GRAN TRAK 10



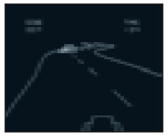
1974
Atari
A simplistic affair viewed from an overhead perspective (like most of the early racing titles), your objective was simply to drive round a single-screen track accumulating points for distance covered. Now the race was on…

NIGHT DRIVER



1976
Atari
The first quasi-3D driving game was developed by Atari. Using white lines to depict the roadside, the premise that you were driving at night was used to disguise the lack of detail on the road. A seminal title that paved the way for games like *OutRun*.

SPEED FREAK



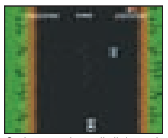
1979
Vectorbeam
This game was light years ahead of its time. The road, traffic and trackside objects were displayed using vector graphics, giving the title a highly realistic feel. This level of realism would not be seen again in coin-op form until Atari's *Hard Drivin'* in 1989.

SPRINT 2



1976
Kee Games
One of many clones inspired by *Gran Trak 10, Sprint 2* (the '2' representing the number of players) was another simplistic overhead affair featuring multiple tracks for two players. *Sprint* later appeared in one-, four- and eight-player versions.

SPYHUNTER



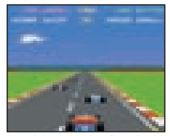
1983
Midway
This game was one of the first to combine driving and shooting – all of which took place to the sounds of the *Peter Gunn Theme*. Gadgets such as oil slicks and smokescreens could be used and your car could even turn into a speedboat.

TX-1



1983
Tatsumi
This lesser-spotted machine was like *Pole Position* on steroids. It's best remembered for its enormous three-screen cabinet – the main action was displayed on the centre screen while the left and right monitors provided a panoramic view.

POLE POSITION



1982
Namco/Atari
Pole Position's colourful visuals and fast gameplay changed peoples' expectations of how driving games should look and play. Time hasn't been kind to *Pole Position*, but the game's importance within the genre cannot be overstated.

BUGGY BOY (SPEED BUGGY)



1986
Tatsumi
This quirky racer came in standard and deluxe (three-screen) formats. Your task was to drive a buggy around a series of cartoonish landscapes, all filled with various obstacles. You could flip your vehicle about and even drive on two wheels.

OUTRUN



1986
Sega
With its astonishing sprite-scaling visuals, great car handling and a selectable soundtrack *OutRun* set new standards in the driving genre. The ability to choose your route was also novel and *OutRun* still looks and plays like a dream.

WEC LE MANS 24



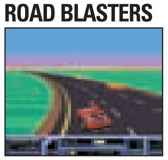
1986
Konami
Konami's game was based on the famous race of the same name, boasting good graphics and relatively realistic handling. The design of the cabinet – which was shaped like a sort of jacuzzi that rotated as you drove – was a stroke of genius.

SUPER SPRINT



1986
Atari
This sequel to *Sprint* saw one to three players racing around a series of increasingly complicated tracks. The easily spun wheels of the cabinet suited the action perfectly and collecting spanners let you improve your car's specs.

ROAD BLASTERS



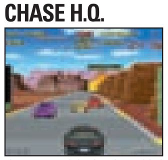
1987
Atari
Road Blasters allowed stressed-out players to blow away other drivers. The graphics were basic and the handling was far from realistic, but this was an enjoyable title. A friendly plane-type thing that dropped off extra weaponry spiced things up.

FINAL LAP



1987
Namco
Final Lap is best remembered for being the first multi-cabinet multiplayer coin-op racing game. Four sets of twin cabinets could be linked, allowing a total of eight players to indulge in the game's Formula 1-based action.

CHASE H.Q.



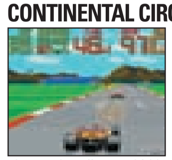
1988
Taito
With *Chase H.Q.*, Taito refined the mission-based driving game genre. An assortment of ne'er-do-wells had to be apprehended before they crossed the border – this basically involved ramming their vehicles with your Porsche-like car.

POWER DRIFT



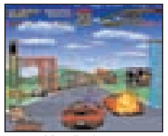
1988
Sega
It's fair to say that in terms of coin-op driving titles, Sega was becoming the master. In this game, standard tracks were replaced with courses that bore more resemblance to rollercoasters than your typical racing environment.

CONTINENTAL CIRCUS



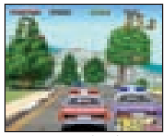
1988
Taito
This was meant to be called *Continental Circuit* – clearly something got lost in the translation. The game itself was a passable racer with nice weather effects and fairly realistic damage effects. There was a pit crew too, to fix you up.

SPECIAL CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION



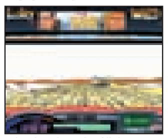
1989
Taito
The sequel to *Chase H.Q.* took the gameplay of the original and added a twist – you could hang out of the car and shoot at the enemy. Visually, the game was superior to *Chase H.Q.* and the shooting element needed plenty of skill.

CISCO HEAT



1990
Jaleco
In theory this was an interesting release which saw you hurtling through the streets of San Francisco. Different routes could be taken as you competed against your rivals. Sadly, it was let down by glitchy graphics.

LUCKY & WILD



1993
Namco
This extremely inventive driving/shooting game saw players controlling the two eponymous cops. The cabinet featured a steering wheel and a pair of lightguns, meaning that one of you could drive while the other player shot at the crooks.

CRAZY TAXI



1999
Sega
Assuming the role of a taxi driver, your task was to speed around the streets and pick up fares. If you made too many slip-ups on the way to your destination the disgruntled passenger would get out without paying. Bugger.

HARD DRIVIN'



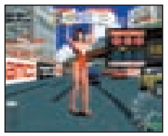
1989
Atari
This was touted as the most realistic driving simulation yet seen in an arcade. For its time, *Hard Drivin'* was an impressive title. The mixture of realism and the game's memorable loop section made for a unique driving experience.

RACE DRIVIN'



1990
Atari
Hard Drivin' was a major hit for Atari, so it came as no surprise when the firm developed a sequel. *Race Drivin'* did little more than its predecessor other than introduce a number of new cars and circuits – hardly revolutionary, but good fun.

RIDGE RACER



1993
Namco
When Namco's superb *Ridge Racer* appeared, gamers were blown away. Indeed, following the release of this highly playable title, sprite-based racers became a thing of the past. Power sliding round corners in the deluxe cabinets was a joy.

CRUIS'N USA



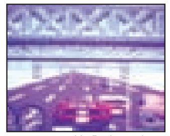
1994
Midway
Developed by a team headed by the legendary Eugene Jarvis (creator of *Defender*), much was expected from this game. Sadly, it failed to deliver the goods. Average graphics and suspect vehicle handling meant this paled next to *Ridge Racer.*

CRAZY TAXI 3: HIGH ROLLER



2003
Sega
Oh, how times change – the finest driving games used to appear in arcades first and on home systems later. Not these days. But the good news is that Sega delivered a version of the Xbox's *Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller* to arcades last year.

TURBO OUTRUN



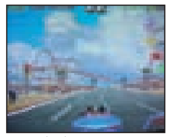
1989
Sega
This lame *OutRun* sequel had the same concept as the first game, although this time you had a turbo option that made your car overheat if you overused it. Perhaps the game's worst problems were its lacklustre visuals and uninspiring gameplay.

RAD MOBILE



1991
Sega
Arguably one of Sega's most accomplished sprite-based racers: forked paths, police chases and snazzy weather effects helped bring the action to life. This was one of Sega's first titles to use the System 32 board set and it looked great.

OUTRUNNERS



1993
Sega
This was another *OutRun* sequel. Rather than use polygon visuals, the developers opted to remain with sprite-based visuals which seemed to have a more cartoony look about them. But with games like *Ridge Racer* around this didn't do well.

DAYTONA USA



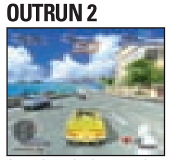
1994
Sega
Stunning visuals were backed up by impossibly addictive gameplay in Sega's classic. The feedback from the wheel meant your car handled like a dream but the real fun was to be had with eight players competing against one another.

DAYTONA USA 2: BATTLE ON THE EDGE



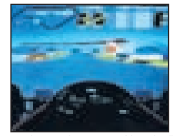
1998
Sega
You can't improve on perfection but Sega had a good try with this sequel to the stunning *Daytona USA*. Somehow it wasn't as addictive as the original. That said, we still pumped a fair old bit of cash into the beast.

OUTRUN 2



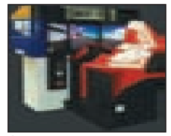
2003
Sega
It may have taken 17 years to arrive, but Sega's official follow-up to the excellent *Outrun* was everything we hoped for. Stunning visuals, fantastic remixed tunes and a terrific Xbox conversion (with Live play) had us crying with joy. Almost.

WINNING RUN



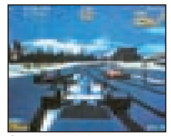
1988
Namco
After the success of Atari's *Hard Drivin'*, Namco released this polygon GP game. It was enjoyable enough, but it failed to make a major impact on the gaming scene. Also, the limited nature of console technology meant it never made it into homes.

DRIVER'S EYES



1990
Namco
Strikingly similar to Namco's early *Winning Run*. *Driver's Eyes* was a polygon racer, but it benefited from a rather fancy three-screen cabinet. Of course, the cabs were expensive so only larger arcades could afford to get the machine.

VIRTUA RACING



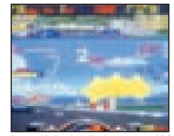
1992
Sega
Sega's polygon racer heralded a new era in terms of coin-op driving games, offering the most realistic racing experience to date. One of its main innovations was the way players could switch between different camera angles mid-game.

FERRARI F355 CHALLENGE



1999
Sega
With this three-screen monster, Sega released a surprisingly realistic coin-op racer. Those used to over-the-top power sliding must have got a serious wake-up call when they first played this one…

SUPER MONACO GP



1989
Sega
When it was released in 1989, this F1 title looked absolutely gorgeous. As the title suggests, your task was to race through the beautifully detailed streets of Monaco. A cut down (in visual terms) Mega Drive conversion followed.

SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP



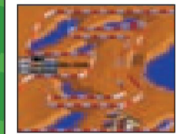
1995
Sega
Rally games really took off after this title. What made this so special was the vehicle handling, which was absolutely spot on. Indeed, the satisfaction from masterfully holding a drift as you screamed round a mountain pass was immeasurable.

SEGA RALLY 2 CHAMPIONSHIP



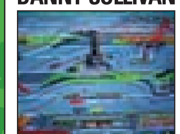
1998
Sega
This sequel used Sega's powerful Model3 technology. It looked very good – little touches like glowing brake discs really made the game look rather sweet – but the courses just weren't as enjoyable as those in the original.

IRONMAN IVAN STEWART'S SUPER OFF ROAD



1989
Leland Corporation
A polished off-road racer that saw three players blasting around one-screen overhead tracks in 4 x 4 trucks. It was an unashamed *Super Sprint* clone, but the way the trucks reacted to potholes and pools of water was most impressive.

DANNY SULLIVAN'S INDY HEAT



1991
Leland Corporation
One of the last overhead driving coin-ops, this is arguably one of the most polished games of its type, with fantastic graphical detail and solid gameplay. The title had elements from *Super-Off Road* and *Super Sprint.*

S·M·A·S·H T·V

WHAT BETTER THAN A GAME SHOW WHERE YOU CAN SLAUGHTER THUGS AND WIN A TOASTER AT THE SAME TIME? THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE THOUGHT



▲ If it was big money and prizes you were after, then seeking out the cash-packed bonus rooms was more important than anything else.





Greatest RETRO Game Ever

Big money, big prizes and we loved it – Smash TV, that is. Sure, everyone loves a good gameshow but watching people win virtual money and prizes isn't exactly the most riveting concept on the planet. Of course, if you took those expensive four-slice toasters, luxury holidays and brand new cars and tossed them into a high-tech arena, then threw in a hefty dose of cyborg slaughter and explosive weaponry… well, you'd have the best darn gameshow on earth. And that's before you even think about asking Bob Monkhouse to present it.

Having obviously overdosed on late-night screenings of Arnold Schwarzenegger's *The Running Man*, the bright sparks in the arcade division of Midway – or Bally Midway, as it was known back then – came up with *Smash TV*. Basically a tongue-in-cheek affair that encapsulated everything Arnie's movie had (over-the-top violence in a game-show environment) and everything it didn't (pointless prizes and far too much firepower for its own good), the game managed to provide simple yet effective controls, highly addictive 'just one more go' gameplay, and possibly the most memorable and annoying soundbites on the planet.

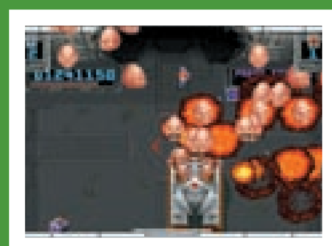
You see, being an arcade game meant that *Smash TV* had to have enough presence to capture the imagination of anyone walking by. And what do all the best game shows have that stand out above all other TV programmes? Why, obnoxious hosts, of course. It wasn't easy to ignore the wild-eyed man in the shiny red jacket shouting slogans that wouldn't seem out of place in *Robocop* ("I'd buy that for a dollar!") at the top of his voice – phrases like "Total carnage – I love it!" and "Good luck – you'll need it!" still ring in our ears today.

Format(s): **Arcade (first), NES, Master System, SNES, Mega Drive, Amiga, Atari ST**
Release: **1990 (arcade), 1991 (home formats)**
Publisher: **Williams (Arcade), Acclaim (Console), Ocean (Computer)**
Developer: **Midway**

Of course, this was just a precursor to the action and even once you were knee-deep in the remains of Mr Shrapnel, you had to keep your eyes open for those keys that would grant you access to the Pleasure Dome near the end of the game. Ah, yes, the Pleasure Dome. Despite being a tad disappointing once you actually got inside (it was just another small room, albeit one packed with loads of prizes and 'beautiful' women), the 'getting inside' bit wasn't easy and ultimately became the aim of any hardened *Smash TV* player.

Collecting only ten keys across what amounts to over 40 screens doesn't sound that difficult but depending on how the machine you were playing was set up, it could range from being incredibly simple to damn near impossible. Grabbing keys when they appeared was one of the most frantic tasks of the game, since reaching them usually meant having to plough through a horde of enemies and so running the risk of death. Still, that was nothing compared to fighting your way through every room, defeating all three end-of-show bosses and reaching the chamber outside the Pleasure Dome (pumping countless credits into the machine in the process), only to discover you've collected just nine keys.

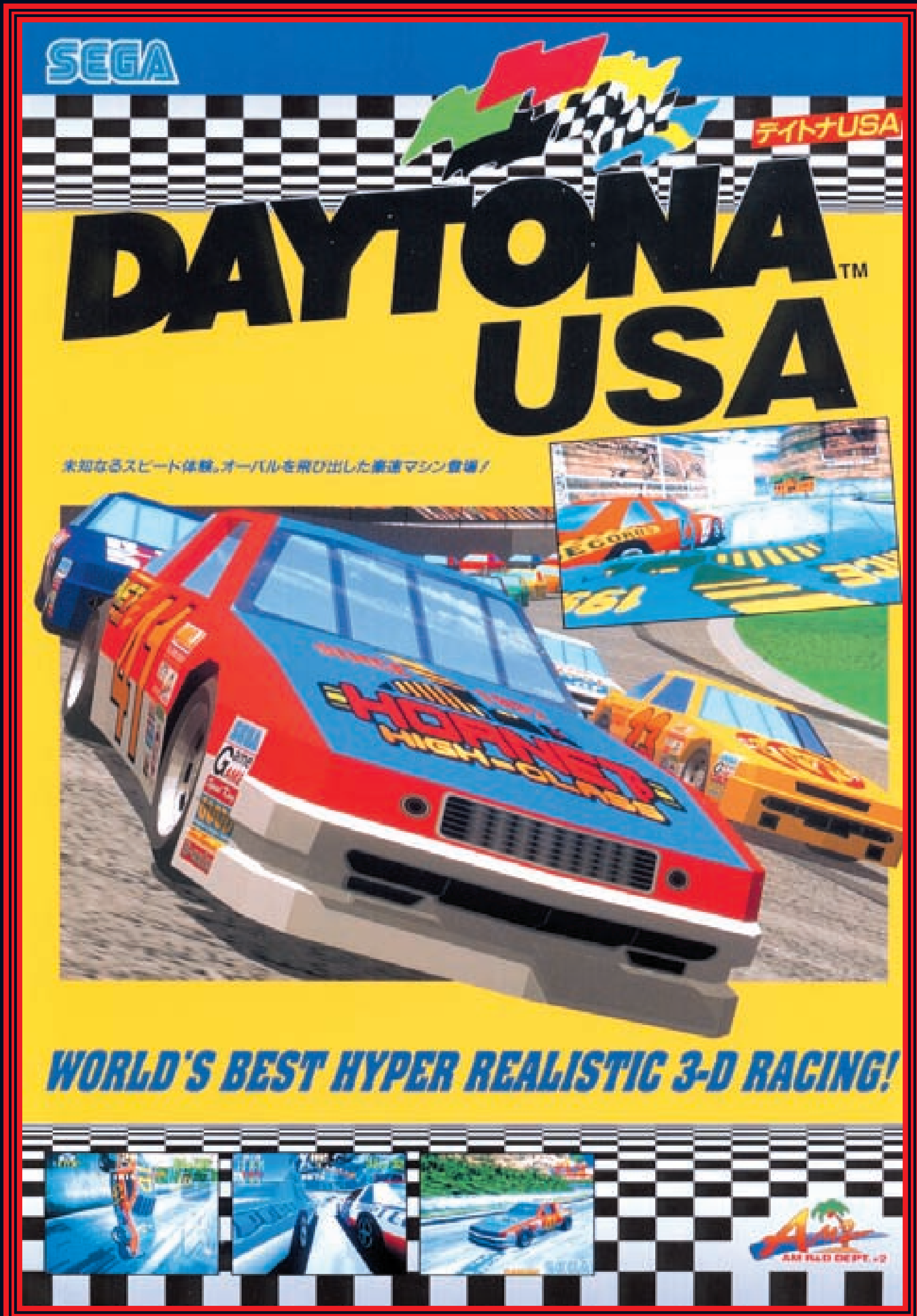
Could this be one of the most frustrating moments in gaming history? It certainly comes close…



▲ Ah, the Mutoid Man – at the time, one of the more memorable boss characters around. But he wasn't a patch on the very last enemy of the game.

SEQUEL-TASTIC

Surprisingly, *Smash TV* not only had a sequel but has also inspired another recent Midway game. The official sequel was *Total Carnage* – named after the phrase from the first game, released in arcades in 1992 and then on home systems in 1993 – which removed all the game show elements and instead placed you on the front line of an assault against evil dictator General Ahkboob. In 2001, though, Midway released *The Grid*, a multiplayer gameshow-based shoot-'em-up that, thanks to the 3D aspect, combined elements from *Quake III Arena* and *Smash TV*. Now if only it came out for the home machines… Online play, anyone?



DAYTONA USA (Model 2 arcade board) Sega, 1994 – Original Arcade Flyer

THE P D



In the Eighties, if you wanted to play cutting-edge videogames you headed to the local arcade. Sure, there were home consoles but if you craved the real thing there was only one place to go. Sadly, by the Nineties the coin-op industry was a shadow of its former self. Let us take you back to the glory days when the arcade was king…

From the late Seventies to the early Nineties, the coin-op videogame industry was a hotbed of creative game design and innovation. Classics such as *Pac-Man, Ghosts 'N Goblins* and *Street Fighter II* all made their first appearances in coin-op form. Yet today, arcades seem to have lost that special something that made them so exciting.

Gone are the rows of JAMMA-compatible cabinets that used to line the walls of dark, smoke-filled dens of iniquity. In their place we have cash-hungry, hydraulic monstrosities that offer little in terms of real gameplay or value for money. Worse still, most arcades have been transformed from shady no-go areas into sanitised family-friendly environments.

The arcades of today are a pale imitation of those of yesteryear, both in terms of atmosphere and the standard of games contained within them. Coin-operated videogames now lag behind their console counterparts in terms of quality, while profits within the trade have taken a big knock. So what were the driving factors behind the fall of a once great and proud industry?

HALCYON DAYS

Most gamers over the age of 25 will probably remember the old days of the coin-op industry – a period when you could walk into an arcade and see row upon row of quality videogames on display. The sight of titles like *Commando, Bubble Bobble* and *1942* all lined up proudly next to one another was enough to send a shiver down your spine. There was something truly exhilarating about entering an arcade in those days.

ENNY ROPS

Keith Ainsworth, former editor of old-school gaming fanzine, *Retrogamer* (retrogamer.merseyworld.com), defines what it was that made arcades so great: "Low ambient lighting so you could see the screen well, the sound turned way up, and enough people to give some atmosphere but not too many to hog the machines." Eighties arcades were typically rather insalubrious places, filled with the sort of kids your parents had warned you about. But, says Ainsworth, "an arcade isn't the same without a floor that's sticky and some kid offering to get you through the next level."

Yes indeed, if you skived off double geography on Wednesday afternoons then the only place to be seen was in the darkest corner of your local arcade – it was almost like being a member of a badly run youth club where you could meet up with fellow ne'er-do-wells and discuss the events of the day. Furthermore, if you could complete *Shinobi* with just one credit or clock *Kung-Fu Master* without losing a life then the respect and admiration of your peers was assured (well, sometimes, at least).

Best of all, coin-ops gave the kids who never got picked for the football team a chance to wow the girls. John Caladine of retro coin-op suppliers Arcade Warehouse remembers how this wasn't always successful. "Trying to impress the girls with your skills on the machines never worked," he says. "There was always someone cooler who would get the pretty ones. Us spotty types kept together."

While many friendships were forged around a *Defender* cabinet, competition for the much sought-after top score on the latest games led to intense rivalries between players – something, according to Keith Ainsworth, that's missing from today's arcades. "One thing I miss about old coin-ops is trying to beat my high scores," he says. "This is part of my love for old games, when a high score meant something – no continues, no more playing just because you can put some extra cash in. These days it seems you can get a million points for something minor, rendering it all meaningless."

The thrill of a new machine arriving was also something to be cherished. In those days, coin-op coverage in magazines was restricted to a few short pages (if you were lucky). Consequently, games would turn up in your local arcade almost completely unannounced and they didn't need months of intensive hype to sell themselves, they got by on quality alone. This was particularly true for earlier releases such as *Defender*, *Asteroids* and *Space Invaders*. Indeed, Caladine and Ainsworth both cite *Space Invaders* as the game that got them hooked with its colourful cabinets and "instant drama".

COAST TO COAST

If you lived near the coast then you were lucky, as places like as Blackpool, Weston-super-Mare and Brighton were packed full of arcades. But even if you weren't near the sea you could usually find a decent enough place in your town centre, as Ainsworth explains: "In the early Eighties, coin-ops seemed ubiquitous. Every chip shop, sweet shop, youth club, café and bowling alley would have a *Scramble* machine tucked away somewhere."



It's all very different now though. Granted, many of the larger seaside arcades are still open, but most are now packed with unimaginative racing titles and novelty releases such as snowboarding (*Alpine Surfer*) and horse racing (*Final Furlong*) games. Worse still, when you do stumble upon an old favourite like *Flying Shark* or *Bionic Commando* you can bet that the cabinet's joystick will be broken or one of its buttons jammed. As for city centre establishments these have all but disappeared and those that remain generally contain nothing more than fruit machines.

Tragically, most modern arcades can now been found in multiplexes where they're usually tacked on to burger bar franchises and cinemas. More often than not they're brightly lit, clean and enforce a strict no-

THE PENNY DROPS

COIN SLOT

smoking policy. Put simply: the amusement arcades of today have lost all their soul, a point reinforced by John Caladine. "The magic has gone," he says. "The cabinets are bland, the gameplay is poor and doesn't 'hold' you like the older games." Indeed, a recent trip down to one of our local amusement halls revealed hordes of screaming six-year-olds begging their stressed-out parents for money (probably to chuck into one of those silly photo machines that makes your face look funny). In our books this just isn't cricket.

STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE

There are various reasons for the decline in popularity and general transformation of the arcade sector. The aforementioned lack of atmosphere is one and the industry's preoccupation with expensive cabinet technology is another. Keith Ainsworth also blames the decline of the arcades on an increasing lack of diversity. "By the early Nineties, it mostly came down to beat-'em-ups and driving games," he says. "A mid-Eighties arcade had such choice – platformers, shoot-'em-ups, puzzle games, gun games, sports games, maze games, cute games, space games…"

Coin-op manufacturers' obsession with exploiting new cabinet technology resulted in the growth of novelty games that relied on extravagant hydraulic cabinets rather than solid gameplay to hook players. These titles had more in common with the mechanical rides for kids that you see outside supermarkets than they did with the great coin-ops of yesteryear. As such, the demographic they attracted shifted from teenage males to younger children, families and courting couples. Naturally, the last three groups were unlikely to want to spend time in shady, smoke-filled dives so many arcades began to clean up their act. Things would never be the same. The question is what was it that drove the coin-op manufacturers into focusing less on gameplay and more on the cabinets the games came in?





AHEAD OF THE GAME

The most obvious culprit for the death of the coin-op is the home console. In the early days of the 8-bit era, home systems simply couldn't compete with the far more advanced coin-op technology – home conversions could only hope to try to capture the spirit of arcade hits. Indeed, the relatively limited architecture of a 48k Spectrum could never really have been expected to accurately emulate the advanced visuals and audio of a machine such as *Paperboy*. That said, a number of decent conversions – such as Elite's Spectrum conversion of Capcom's *Commando* – had a good try, but if you wanted to play the real thing you simply had to take a few quid down to your local arcade.

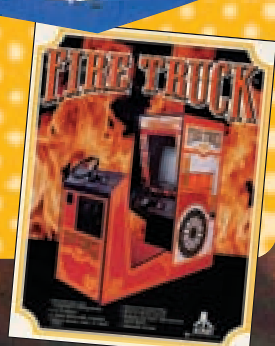
Even the arrival of more powerful home systems such as the NES didn't herald much of a change. For example, anyone who ever played the NES conversion of Irem's *Kung-Fu Master* (*Kung-Fu*) will testify to the fact wthat the game was a pale imitation of its coin-op parent. Likewise, Sega's own conversions of titles such as *OutRun* for the Master System couldn't hope to do full justice to the originals – largely due to the radically more powerful architecture of the coin-ops. Indeed the gap between home systems and arcade technology ensured it was the latter that always played host to the best games.

However, in October 1987 NEC launched a new console in Japan that was capable of delivering far superior visuals and audio than the NES and Master System. The machine was, of course, the PC Engine and with the release of conversions of games like *R-Type*, the often-used (but rarely accurate) term 'arcade perfect' stopped sounding so hollow. The reality was that these conversions weren't perfect, but to the untrained eye there was little difference between these home versions and the coin-op originals. The console enjoyed a good degree of success in its native Japan and did moderately well in the US, where it was renamed the Turbografx-16. The system never made it to the UK, though some gamers picked one up on import. The important thing was that the divide between home machines and coin-ops had finally been bridged. In some ways this could be seen as the beginning of the end for

DEDICATION, DEDICATION… THAT'S WHAT YOU DON'T NEED

So what exactly does the term 'dedicated cabinet' mean? Well, the answer is simple. A dedicated cabinet is a machine that can run only one or, at best, a handful of games. Naturally, the more extravagant the machine is the more it costs. By turns, this means the price per credit is usually bumped up to recoup outlay. With the rise in popularity of home gaming, which led to the effective demise of the trusty and cheap JAMMA cabinets, arcades began to rely more and more on these overblown beasts. This, along with tax changes that affected the coin-op industry, resulted in the end of the old 20p-per-play heyday of the coin-op videogame.





THE FIVE GOLDEN RULES OF THE OLD ARCADES

By law, every British arcade in the Eighties had to abide by these rules or face massive fines (probably).

1: Arcades had to contain a foul patterned carpet preferably soaked in vomit and other unidentifiable substances.

2: Every machine in the arcade had to have at least three cigarette burns or a similar amount of chewing gum pieces located on the cabinet.

3: Every arcade had to have a disgruntled teenager called Crow, Spatch or Fisher who would visit all day, every day and communicate only through grunts.

4: Any under 16-year-olds wishing to legally enter an arcade could only be permitted entrance if they were capable of producing a half-full packet of high tar cigarettes and a can of Woodpecker cider.

5: The only machines allowed to benefit from a fully working joystick and button set-up were the ones that nobody ever played (fully working *Knuckle Joe*, anyone? We didn't think so….).

the coin-op as it was. Other consoles such as the Mega Drive and Super Famicom followed and again offered a selection of near-perfect conversions. Capcom's port of *Street Fighter II* may have lacked a few frames of animation compared to the arcade game, but for most people it was pretty much spot on (although we don't mean the dire PAL translation of the title).

CABINET RESHUFFLE

Naturally, certain games remained technically too complex to make it in one piece to home systems such as the Super Famicom, but with the advent of 32-bit consoles like the PlayStation and Saturn, the gap between arcade titles and home conversions more or less disappeared. The fact that many coin-ops began to use variants of home console technology kept manufacturing and development costs down, but it also meant that home conversions began to better their coin-op originals – just look at *Tekken Tag Tournament*.

Similarly, Namco's conversion of *Ridge Racer* for the PSone was an almost flawless translation of a coin-op that was only about six months old. The only major difference in playing *Ridge Racer*

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Now don't get us wrong, we're not saying these are the best coin-ops of all time, but for some reason they seemed to appear in almost every arcade you walked into during the Eighties.

These were the titles you just couldn't get away from and even years after their release you could still find them lurking about. Of course, in this new millennium they've all but disappeared and now we really miss them. To paraphrase Joni Mitchell: You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone, they paved paradise and put up a bloody great horse riding game. Tsk, honestly…



XEVIOUS (NAMCO 1982)

In its day, this vertical-scrolling shoot-'em-up was a real favourite, but by the mid-Eighties it was looking somewhat dated. However, for some unknown reason it retained its place in the dark corners of many arcades throughout the land. You never saw anyone playing it, yet somehow it always felt reassuring to know that it was there if you felt the need to have a quick blast. When it was finally taken away you couldn't help but feel that you were losing an old friend.



KUNG-FU MASTER (IREM 1984)

If an arcade didn't have a *Kung-Fu Master* cabinet tucked away in it then it probably wasn't worth visiting. You would almost have believed it was the law for amusement arcades to have at least one version of this scrolling beat-'em-up on site. Fortunately, it was extremely good fun to play, although often you'd find that the game had been stuffed into an old cabinet with a dodgy old four-way joystick, thus making certain stages almost unplayable.



DOUBLE DRAGON (TAITO 1987)

This Taito beat-'em-up was one of the biggest coin-op hits of 1987. Such was its popularity you often had to 'put your money down' for a go. Much like *Shinobi*, it was possible to complete the game with just one credit. However, whereas Sega's masterpiece required quick reflexes and skill, *Double Dragon* could be completed easily with the just the one move – the notorious elbow attack. If you only had 20p and wanted to kill some time then this was a Godsend.



BUBBLE BOBBLE (TAITO 1986)

Another one that always showed up in the arcades, in our opinions this was arguably one of the greatest platform/action games of all time. Trying to learn everything about the game was damn near impossible and even now the game contains subtle little secrets which remain a mystery. The enduring popularity of the game has ensured that it's now available for the GBA, so a whole new generation can experience the joy of bubbling.



SHINOBI (SEGA 1987)

One of the finest coin-ops ever released and infinitely superior to every conversion that followed. Again, this was another machine that felt like part of the furniture in your local arcade. *Shinobi* was a real favourite among cash-strapped players, as once you'd mastered it you could get through the game on just one credit. Of course, defeating The Masked Ninja at the end of the fifth stage was something that demanded true skill from players.



HORSE RACING (VARIOUS)

This one came in several varieties and was usually located in the centre of the arcade. The premise was simple – eight mechanically controlled horses raced up a small piece of track, each offered different odds and, as you might expect, the it was the horses with the lowest odds that always seemed to come in first. The cry of, "Place your bets now, please" which emanated from the machine still brings a tear to our eyes.

THE PENNY DROPS

COIN SLOT



▶ A few seaside resorts still have arcades that look like the ones we remember so fondly from the Eighties. A few fruit machines, a pool table and rows of game cabinets. Not sure about the Noddy car, though…



on the PlayStation was that it lacked the steering wheel and fancy cabinet of the deluxe arcade model. Suffice to say, major manufacturers such as Sega and Namco saw this as the way forward for arcade games, the thinking being that flashy cabinets could provide something that gamers couldn't experience with a home console. Admittedly, novelty coin-op cabinets were nothing new, but whereas in the past they had been the exception they suddenly became the norm. As a result of this several things happened.

Crucially, the rising costs involved in manufacturing these increasingly bizarre cabinets (think of *Hang Pilot* from Konami) forced the typical price of a credit up to one pound. After all, arcade operators – who had splashed out tens of thousands on these machines – had to get their money back somehow. Gone were the days when you'd pay just 20 pence per play – Keith Ainsworth remembers playing *Crazy Kong* (a pirate version of *Donkey Kong*) for 40 minutes on just ten pence. What's more, the games themselves became far more superficial and gimmicky. Again this was nothing new, but suddenly the concept was taken to its illogical conclusion. In the past, skilled players who had invested time on a machine could often complete it with one credit, allowing them to stay on the game for a considerable amount of time without any major financial outlay. With the gradual disappearance of the relatively cheap JAMMA-compatible titles (see 'Bread And JAMMA' boxout), this sort of value for money came to an abrupt end.

Of course, with the old cabinets, the low price didn't stop people trying to cut corners, and Ainsworth recalls an unscrupulous practice involving the 'clickers' that produce sparks for lighting gas fires. "In the arcade you could put them against the metal of the coin mechanism," he explains. "The spark would bridge the contact and register a credit. The *Kong* machine would register a credit with a loud 'ding' sound, so a couple of kids shielded the machine while they tried the clicker. The machine went 'd-d-d-d-d-d-d-d-ding', registering ten credits with abnormal speed. Now you know why modern coin mechs are made of plastic."

Naturally, we don't endorse this kind of behaviour and can't be held responsible if you fancy a free game of *Asteroids*. But this small-time cost-cutting was all part of the atmosphere of the Eighties arcades, rather than the reason for current pound-per-play

BREAD AND JAMMA

So what's all this talk about JAMMA? Well, in the early days of the coin-op industry most new games came in their own specific cabinet, which couldn't easily be altered to run another game. This meant when a title began to decline in popularity the whole machine often had to be removed and replaced with a completely new cabinet. As you might expect, this proved to be an expensive nuisance for manufacturers and arcade operators. However, in the early to mid-Eighties the Japanese Amusement Machinery Manufacturers Association (JAMMA to its friends) came up with a great money-saving solution.

Members of the association – including a healthy number of western firms like Midway and Atari – decided on a standard connection that would allow any JAMMA-compatible printed circuit board (PCB) to be plugged into any (well, just about any) JAMMA-compatible cabinet. This meant that when a game stopped earning money the arcade owner simply had to remove the circuit board and replace it with another one. It's not much trickier than swapping a cartridge in a console.

This proved to be a much cheaper alternative to lugging the whole caboodle away, and from the mid-Eighties through to the early Nineties, JAMMA-compatible boards became (more or less) the industry standard. The system is still used even today. Of course, if you're thinking of buying your own machine then a JAMMA-compatible cabinet is probably your best bet. It's reasonably easy to get an arcade experience in your own front room – for more advice, check out our feature on page 248.



▲ This insignificant-looking circuit board actually contains a heap of gaming joy.



▲ Game not doing well? Take out the board, drop in a new one, lick of paint – presto! New game.

games and the industry's financial woes.

ARCADE IMPERFECT

So with the golden days of the arcade going a bit rusty, what hope is there for coin-op fans? With profits continuing to dwindle and home consoles growing ever more powerful, many major firms have left the coin-op market altogether and those that remain are having to work in conjunction with each other to keep development and manufacturing costs at a reasonable level. It would seem that the days when arcades played host to the best games are all but over.

As for the youngsters of today, most would rather spend their spare money on mobile phones and other such new-fangled nonsense. Still, the existence of emulators such as MAME means that many old classics, which would otherwise have been lost forever, can still be enjoyed on a home computer. Caladine and Ainsworth agree that it's a case of 'the original and best' but concede that emulators can be a boon. "The actual machine is the ultimate way to play," says Ainsworth, "with a joystick and those cool arcade buttons. However, emulators are a great way of preserving the classics and a way of playing them for those of us without a grand to spend on each one."

Unfortunately, attempts to open retro arcades as viable businesses have, for the most part, fallen flat. John Caladine tried such a venture four years ago, but was forced to close the Arcade Warehouse retro arcade after just two weeks. "Someone smashed a machine, a boy fell off the roof, the police came round twice, super glue was used on the roller shutters, the manager stole the float money and that was all in one week," Caladine explains. "We wanted to do a retro arcade and failed. We might try again when we feel brave."

And so, for the time being at least, it seems unlikely that the arcade sector will ever see a major resurgence in popularity. Yes, it's still ticking over – dancing games retain that 'show off' factor that made the old classics popular – but walking into an arcade today just doesn't hit the spot. However, those who were there at the time can take pleasure in knowing that they witnessed one of the most important and exciting eras in videogaming history.

Ten Reasons Why Eighties Arcades Were Great

1: The games were all relatively cheap and there were tons of them to choose from. Most of them were rather good as well, which you can't say about many modern coin-ops.

2: The almost suffocating haze of smoke which engulfed you when you walked in added an air of mystery to the whole experience. John Carpenter's *The Fog* had nothing on these places.

3: The sight of the disinterested teenage girl behind the coin-dispenser counter, who'd usually be talking to her boyfriend, chewing gum or filing her nails (often referred to by patrons as the Mona Lisa).

4: Finding yourself surrounded by a group of awestruck admirers as you made your through the notoriously tricky final stage of *Super Commando Invaders Part II*.

5: Being able to skive off whole afternoons of school for the exceptionally low price of £1.50. Now that's what we call value for money.

6: Getting a free credit by informing the staff: "That machine over there just swallowed my money". This was to be used only in times of true hardship.

7: Thinking up new and extremely inventive ways to get swear words on the hi-score tables. Just for the record we don't recognise 'NOB' as a legitimate profanity.

8: The feeling that you were Han Solo in the *Star Wars* Cantina, when in reality you were a spotty-faced, school-shirking NOB.

9: The thrill of a new machine appearing in your local arcade. Who could forget the first time they clapped eyes on the deluxe version of *Space Harrier*?

10: The retina-burning sensation of sunlight hitting your eyes as you walked outside after spending hours in near darkness really made you feel alive.

SOME OF THE GREATS

Trying to pick out the greatest arcade games of all time is nigh-on impossible; there are just too many classics to choose from. Anyway, we've picked out some of the most influential and memorable coin-ops of all time. Yes, you may not agree with the selection, but with so many games to choose from, it was always going to be controversial…

SPACE INVADERS (TAITO, 1978)

This was the one that propelled coin-operated videogames onto the world stage. Indeed, mention the term videogame to anyone over 50 and most likely they will reply, "You mean *Space Invaders*?" The game's massive popularity even caused a temporary coin shortage in its native Japan. Taking on wave after wave of the encroaching invaders was hypnotically addictive and 26 years down the line it remains strangely satisfying and addictive.

PAC-MAN (NAMCO, 1980)

With this unique maze game Namco introduced players to videogaming's first true icon. The simplistic control interface (a solitary four-way joystick) ensured that anyone could pick this up and get to grips with it from the off. A clutch of sequels followed, but the original is arguably the definitive version.

POLE POSITION (NAMCO, 1982)

Regular readers may be aware that we're not massive fans of this widely regarded racing game, but only a fool could deny the impact Namco's racer had on the videogame market. Indeed, racing games that had gone before looked archaic by comparison. Had Namco not developed this when it did, then the driving game genre may have hurtled down a very different road (sorry).

GAUNTLET (ATARI, 1985)

Four-player games were nothing new (just look at *Quadrapong*, for example), but the co-operative gameplay of *Gauntlet* led in many cases to lifelong friendships (and probably a few marriages) being forged. On the flipside, the game was also responsible for many arguments. Remember when one of you got split from the group and stuck in the corner of the screen? No-one was willing to move and eventually all your life points ticked away (maybe that was just us). Regardless, in 1985 if an arcade didn't sport a *Gauntlet* cab then you gave it a wide berth. It was also instrumental in introducing the 'pay as you go' style of play, which would later be taken to extremes by games like *Final Fight*.

OUTRUN (SEGA, 1986)

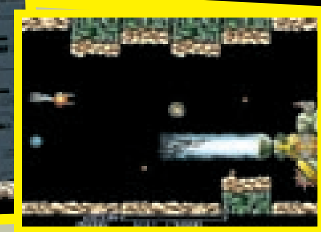
A candidate for the best driving game of all time (if not the best game of all time). Admittedly we bang on about this one quite a lot, but there's no getting away from the fact that Yu Suzuki's stunning racing title is a masterclass in great game design. The deluxe cabinet was a beauty, the game's visuals had that gorgeous colourful Sega look about them and then of course there was that soundtrack – forget about so-called 'epi'c' orchestral scores, this is the business.

A Great RETRO Gaming Moment

R-TYPE







▲ *R-Type* – the original and best? Quite possibly. This is the game that spawned a thousand shoot-'em-ups.

ASK ANY OLD-SCHOOL SHOOT-'EM-UP FAN TO NAME THEIR FAVOURITE GAME AND THEY'LL INVARIABLY PICK R-TYPE. IREM'S MASTERPIECE BURST INTO ARCADES IN 1987, BUT AN UNFEASIBLY HIGH DIFFICULTY LEVEL ENSURED THAT ONLY THE GREATEST (OR RICHEST) PLAYERS WOULD EVER REACH SOME OF THE FRANCHISE'S BEST MOMENTS. JOIN US AS WE JUMP INTO OUR R-9 TO STOP THE BYDO EMPIRE YET AGAIN

R-TYPE (ARCADE, 1987)

This is where it all began; from the moment your ship first blasted across the screen, you could feel that Irem's *R-Type* was something special. After shooting down the first waves of Bydo scum, *R-Type* played its finest card – the Force Orb (see 'Use the Force').

It wasn't just the Force Orb that was unique; your firepower was suitably different from other shooters as well. Instead of just simply hammering the fire button for all you were worth, you were able to charge up your Beam by simply holding down the fire button – once fully charged, a Plasma Beam would be unleashed, causing massive damage to anything in its path.

Getting used to the Force Orb and controlling your weapons were just a small part of the game's learning curve. *R-Type*, perhaps more than any other shooter at the time, was structured in such a way that to be a good player simply wasn't enough. You had to memorise and find a safe route through each of the game's eight levels (few gamers could simply throw a handful of coins into the machine and see the end titles in less than an hour).

Taking a tip from *Gradius*' book, *R-Type* was the kind of shooter that required you to make your way through the game with as much firepower as possible – get shot and you'd be facing a ridiculously tough challenge that wasn't for the faint hearted.

Finally, just when you thought you'd mastered getting through a level without dying, you'd have a boss to contend with. While *R-Type*'s first boss was ridiculously easy to beat (simply fire your Force Orb into its stomach and relax), the later bosses were a different matter – all were wonderfully designed and took huge amounts of Plasma before they eventually succumbed. Like the level design, each boss needed to be closely studied before its weakness could be exploited.

It cannot be underestimated just how good this game was – and still is. It received numerous ports to many systems (stand-outs being the PC Engine and Spectrum versions) and still inspires shooters to this day.

USE THE FORCE

***R-Type*'s Force Orb was one of the most versatile and innovative power-ups ever designed for a shoot-'em-up and is still cloned to this day. Attaching itself to the front or back of your ship, the Force (as it was more commonly known) was able to absorb most bullets and enemies and made for some very strategic gameplay. A quick stab of the second fire button would enable you to launch it forwards or backwards from its current position, where it would then plough through anything that got in its way. A second press would then bring the Orb back towards you so that the whole procedure could be repeated.**



R-TYPE II (ARCADE, 1989)

It couldn't have been easy to follow up such a technically impressive and innovative shooter, but Irem's sequel was nearly as accomplished as the original.

***R-Type II* trod a very similar path to its predecessor – the bio-mechanical aliens were back, many of the bosses reappeared (albeit in slightly different guises) and the distinctive pastel shades of the original were used again to create an immediately familiar feel.**

There was one big difference, though – somebody must have fallen asleep at the difficulty controls because *R-Type II* was bloody hard. The level structure was even more rigid than the original and punished you swiftly and unmercifully. Despite this, though, you never felt that the game was ever unfair and often ended up blaming your frequent deaths on poor reflexes.

Many of the original weapons returned for the sequel along with a few additions. Unfortunately, the so-called Improved Beam was anything but, and although it would unleash a devastating attack when fully charged, it took so long to do so that a quick death was inevitable.

Most of *R-Type*'s stand-out moments were the impressive bosses and those in the sequel were no exception. Huge, devious and able to withstand a lot of firepower, the majority were very similar to those in *R-Type*. Even a small amount of déjà vu couldn't disappoint, as many of the new bosses were superb (see 'You're going down').



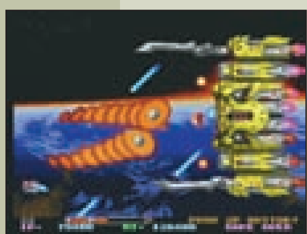
▲ You were armed with an Improved Beam but it wasn't much use in this fearsomely hard game.

***R-Type II* was more a remake than a direct sequel and a few gamers were disappointed with its many similarities to the original game. Although ported to the 16-bit computers the only console version to appear over here was the disappointing *Super R-Type* on the SNES.**

R-TYPE LEO (ARCADE, 1992)

Irem's third stab at the franchise was a brave move that alienated many gamers when it was released, though in hindsight it was probably as good as the original.

Sadly never getting a release outside Japan (or getting ported to a home console), the most noticeable difference in *R-Type Leo* was the absence of the Force. Once you got over this shock, you soon realised that its replacement was a more than suitable substitute.



▲ Your Bits were now an effective weapon.

The two small orbs (known as Bits) that originally floated above and below your ship in the original games could now be used as an offensive weapon. They could still be used for protection, but were definitely geared towards attacking – especially on some of the later levels, where aggressive use of your Bits was crucial. Visually the game was superb with vibrant colours, some meticulously designed opponents and fantastically detailed backgrounds. The addition of a second player also helped distance *R-Type Leo* from the original games. However, while having a comrade to help obliterate the Paradise Project (the Bydos must have been busy) was very handy, it detracted from the 'me versus them' appeal of the series.



▲ This time you had to destroy the Paradise Project.

R-TYPE III: THE THIRD LIGHTNING (SNES, 1994)

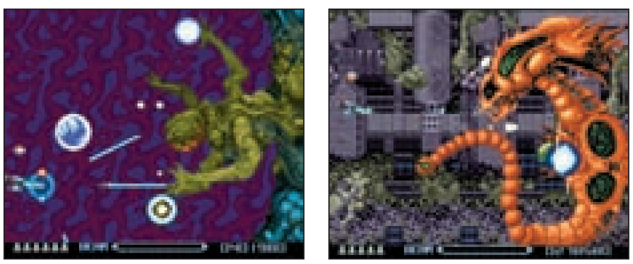
Not doubt stung by *Leo*'s poor reception, Irem and Jaleco's *R-Type III* was a return to form. The Force Orb returned, the second player was nowhere to be seen and the Bydo Empire struck back.

The *R-Type* franchise has always been technically polished and this outing was no exception. Practically every Mode 7 and transparency trick available was used to great effect – rotating levels, wonderfully constructed bosses and some great sprite scaling all resulted in one of the most technically impressive shoot-'em-ups on the SNES.

New weapons made an appearance and you started each game with a choice of three different Force types: the original, Shadow and Cyclone. Each came with its own array of weapons and took some time to fully master.

Difficulty was also something that had been adjusted thanks to checkpoints scattered throughout each of the six levels. In fact, after the incredibly tough *Super R-Type* it was a pleasant surprise to actually make decent headway into the game.

R-Type III: The Third Lightning is a solid addition to the *R-Type* canon and is well worth picking up – copies go for a very reasonable price on eBay.



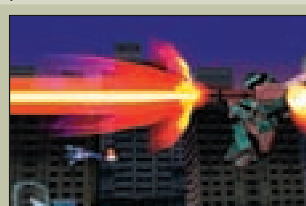
▲ *R-Type III* wasn't an arcade port, which meant Irem and Jaleco could tailor the game to the SNES.

R-TYPE DELTA (PLAYSTATION, 1999)

In 1999, Irem decided that the *R-Type* series needed another makeover. *R-Type Delta* was the result and saw Irem ditching its sprite-based roots for a more consumer-friendly polygon style.

Initially ignored by gamers because of its similarity to Square's *Einhander*, *R-Type Delta* is arguably one of the best shooters on the PSone. First impressions last, and unfortunately *Delta*'s weren't that favourable. For starters, you had three fighters to choose from. Although they were a logical progression from *R-Type III*'s forces, many were upset that other ships dared encroach on the R-9's territory (see 'Choices, choices'). The new graphics were also unpopular with gamers, with many feeling that Irem had not achieved the same bio-mechanical feel of the originals, even though the new look gave the game a wonderful sense of depth. Yet despite these so-called flaws there was still more than enough of the original *R-Type* gameplay to convince initially sceptical fans.

With the implementation of 3D, *R-Type Delta*'s bosses were a sight to behold; often many times the size of the screen, the mechanical behemoths looked spectacular and provided many of the game's most breathtaking moments. *R-Type Delta* is still a classic blaster and a perfect evolution of Irem's franchise.



▲ *R-Type Delta* ditched the sprites in favour of polygons but wasn't a hit with fans straight away.

YOU'RE GOING DOWN

The battles against some of the Bydo bosses in *R-Type II* were particularly tricky, with one of the most exciting encounters being found on level four. Not content with forcing you through a rapidly changing maze, the boss was an absolute nightmare. As it sped away from your R-9 Fighter, your only option was to follow it and send it back to whatever Bydo hell it had sprung from. However, the final battle was the most memorable. Deep inside the Bydo core was a group of imprisoned R-9 Fighters – in the process of freeing your friends you had to contend with the boss using them against you in one of the toughest battles of the series. Fortunately, upon being freed the R-9 would change sides and help you free your other comrades. A great battle, made all the more poignant by the fact that the fighters later lost their lives so that you could escape.

CHOICES, CHOICES

R-Type Delta saw the arrival of three new ships to replace the much put-upon R-9. For the purists out there your best bet was the R-9a Delta. Basically an updated version of the original fighter, the Delta featured a standard Force unit and a new Shockwave Cannon. If you wanted a slightly more powerful beast, it was worth considering the R13 Cerebus; this stocky fighter was heavily armed and featured a weapon called the Hysteric Dawn that tore a hole in space that sucked your enemies into another dimension. Bringing up the rear was the slick RX Albatross. This was the most popular ship of the three simply because its built-in homing device was perfect for lazy pilots.



GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT…

WILD RIDERS

GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT…



Some games get cancelled before they make it onto the shelves. Others get released in Japan, but never get converted to English. And a few – like Sega's Wild Riders – get released in the arcade, but never make it as far as our homes…

Format: **Naomi 2**
Release: **2001**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Wow Entertainment**

Although the Dreamcast wasn't the success that Sega was hoping for, there's no doubt that it did boast a catalogue of superb games. With classics like *Shenmue*, *Rez*, *Sonic Adventure* and *Jet Set Radio*, you could argue that the machine introduced some of the most groundbreaking titles that the industry had seen in quite a few years. The Dreamcast also received a range of Sega arcade translations including *The House Of The Dead 2*, *Crazy Taxi* and *Ferrari F355 Challenge* – all of which proved the company's unmatched ability to create thrilling, though often short-lived, gaming experiences.

Towards the end, however, the rate at which Sega translated its arcade games slowed down, simply because the games weren't selling. This situation meant that a small selection of decent arcade games, mostly ones with limited longevity, were never released in the home at all – titles such as *Wild Riders*, which, due to being developed on the newer Naomi 2 chipset, would have had to have been cut down to run on the Dreamcast anyway.

Featuring the sort of cel-shaded loveliness that had given *Jet Set Radio* its striking visuals a year earlier, *Wild Riders* (with the added power of Naomi 2) certainly offered plenty to look at. Styled to look just like a comic book, the story of two bikers – Trish Moon and Keith Raven – was portrayed through a selection of comic book-esque drawings which then came to life in full 3D. *Wild Riders* is still one of the best examples of cel-shading (or 'manga edge' as it's sometimes known) to date, despite the newer, more powerful technology now on offer.

Aside from the vivid visuals, the game was also a blast to play despite being extremely simplistic. The main premise was simply to get to the next checkpoint along an A-to-B route while avoiding the police – nothing particularly innovative there, then. However, by pushing or pulling the handlebars that were mounted on the arcade cabinet you could slide the bike or perform wheelies to get added reach when launching off ramps and edges. After a couple of attempts, it was possible to slide under police roadblocks or carry out death-defying leaps over buildings, often finding short cuts in the process.



▲ Screw the roadblock – use the handlebars on the cabinet to slide under the barrier.

Nowadays, the only way to play *Wild Riders* is to find one of the few arcades that still has the machine – a difficult task considering that hardly any stocked it in the first place. With Sega still struggling, the chances of a console translation are extremely slim. Oh well, looks like just another game that never quite made it…

CEL-BY DATE

Although cel-shading is still a fairly new graphical effect, it was actually introduced during the late Nineties. Sega's *Jet Set Radio* on Dreamcast is widely seen as being the title that perfected the technique, though the team responsible for it later revealed that inspiration had come from a graphics demo by Melbourne House. The most hotly debated cel-shaded title has to be *Zelda: The Wind Waker*, which still has fans divided.

2000

Jet Set Radio **(DC)**
Sega

2000

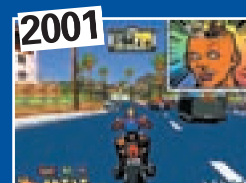
Looney Tunes Space Race **(DC)**
Melbourne House

2000

Wacky Races **(DC)**
Infogrames

2001

Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge **(PS2)**
Bizarre Creations

2001

Wild Riders **(Arcade)**
Sega

2002

Auto Modellista **(PS2)**
Capcom

2002

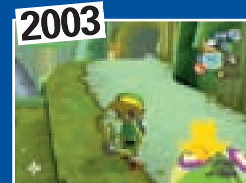
Cel Damage **(GC, PS2, Xbox)**
Pseudo Interactive

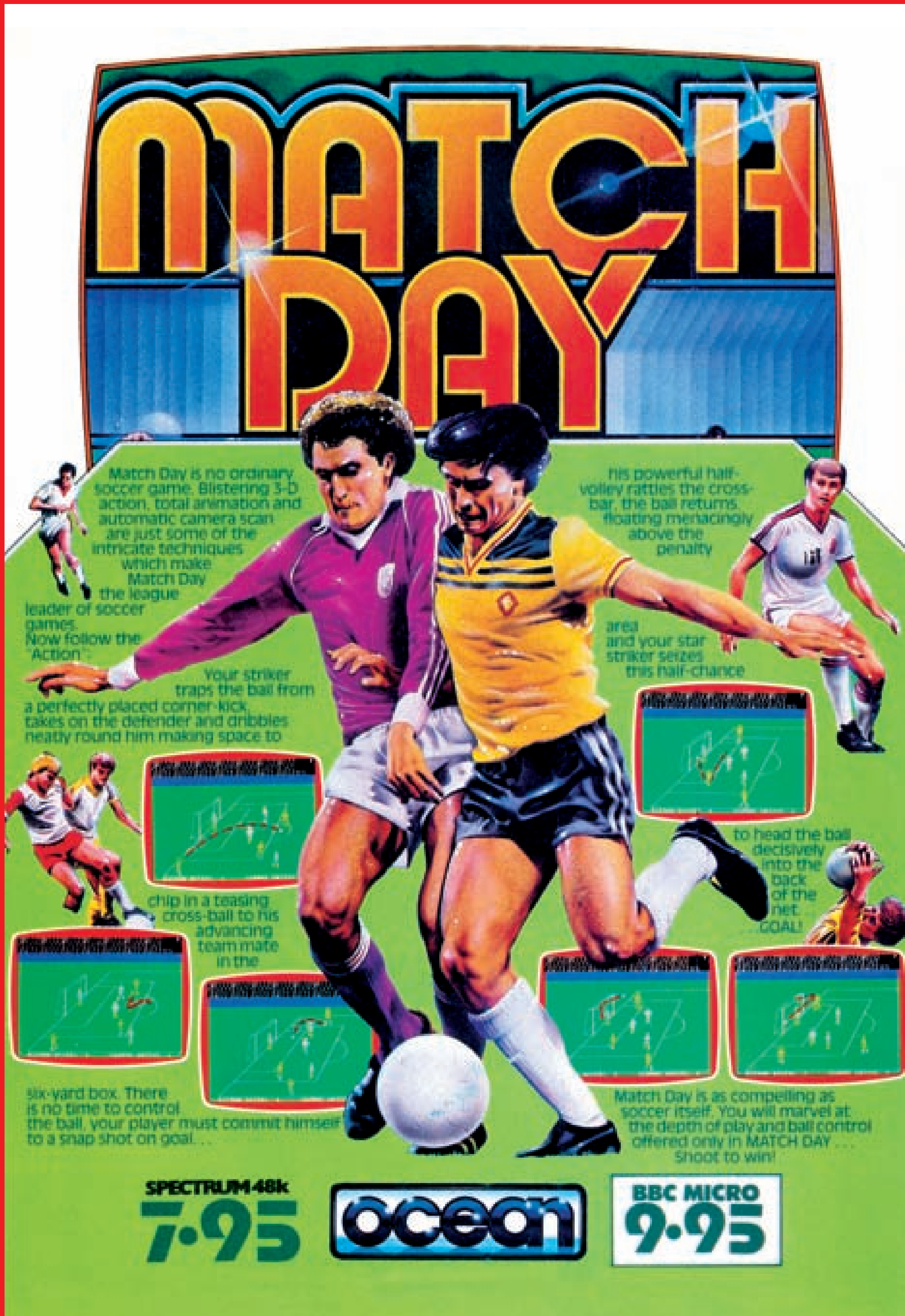
2002

GioGio's Bizarre Adventure **(PS2)**
Capcom

2002

Jet Set Radio Future **(Xbox)**
Sega Smilebit

2003

Zelda: The Wind Waker **(Cube)**
Nintendo



MATCH DAY (Spectrum 48k, BBC Micro) Ocean, 1984 – UK Advertisement

RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION

Company lookback

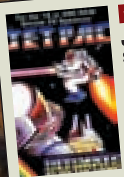
ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME

(1983-1987)

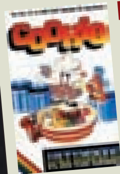
FROM 1983 TO 1986 (YES, WE KNOW IT CONTINUED INTO 1987, BUT BY THEN IT JUST WASN'T THE SAME), ONE COMPANY DOMINATED THE 8-BIT GAMES SCENE, RELEASING A STRING OF HIT TITLES WHICH WERE APPLAUDED BY THE PRESS AND GAMERS ALIKE. THE FIRM WAS, OF COURSE, ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME. WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE TITLES THAT EARNED THE RECLUSIVE SOFTCO (BEFORE IT BECAME RARE) ITS NEAR LEGENDARY STATUS…

Back in the summer of 1983, a fledgling British software house known as Ultimate Play The Game (a trademark of Ashby Computers and Graphics Ltd) released two triple-A games for the Spectrum. The first, *Jetpac,* was an entertaining, single-screen, platform shoot-'em-up, which borrowed ideas from classics like *Defender*. The other title was *Pssst,* an arcade-style product that involved protecting a blossoming Thyrgodian Megga Chrisanthodil from pesky alien bugs (more fun than it sounds). Four further releases followed – *Tranz Am, Cookie, Lunar Jetman* and *Atic Atac*. Each was met with great praise and helped establish the firm as a major player in the UK videogame scene. Indeed, few other publishers and developers could compete with the high standards in visuals and gameplay that Ultimate were setting.

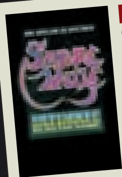
In 1984 the company raised the stakes even higher by releasing *Sabre Wulf* for the Spectrum at the unprecedented price of £9.99 (before this, most titles came in at about £5.95). Fortunately, the game's distinctive packaging and artwork (this would become an Ultimate trademark) and fantastic gameplay ensured it went on to become one



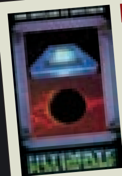
1983
JETPAC
Spectrum, BBC, Vic 20
A fiendishly addictive blaster that remains as fresh today as it was on its original release. Assemble the three pieces of your rocket and then fuel it before making your (temporary) escape.



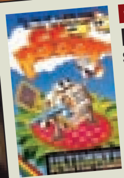
1983
COOKIE
Spectrum
Similar to the earlier *Pssst*, but this time you controlled a luckless chef as he tried to flour-bomb ingredients into his mixing bowl. Rogue items like bolts were not supposed to make it in.



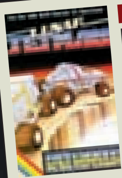
1984
SABRE WULF
Spectrum, Amstrad, BBC, Commodore 64
It cost a whopping £9.99, but the sheer quality of SabreMan's first adventure made this a massive hit. Find the pieces of an amulet to escape the game's dense jungle.



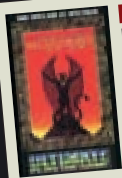
1985
ALIEN 8
Spectrum, Amstrad, BBC, MSX
The first of many Knight Lore clones. Alien 8 arguably tightened up certain gameplay elements, but for many it lacked the charm and, more importantly, the wow factor of its obvious inspiration.



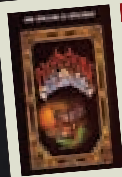
1983
PSSST
Spectrum
Nurturing an alien flower doesn't sound like ideal subject matter for a videogame, but working out which spray killed which insect made for compulsive gaming. Keep an eye on those leaves…



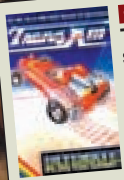
1984
LUNAR JETMAN
Spectrum, BBC
This sequel to *Jetpac* allowed players to explore a whole planet. It is perhaps best remembered for the infamous trailer rumour that was circulated by some magazines (see page 26 for more about this).



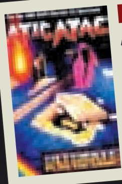
1984
UNDERWURLDE
Spectrum, Commodore 64
This second outing for SabreMan saw him battling against the Devil himself. Exploring the Underwurlde involved some frustrating leaps of faith and the game didn't sell as well as its predecessor.



1985
NIGHTSHADE
Spectrum, Commodore 64, Amstrad, BBC, MSX
Once again this was an isometric adventure, although it also borrowed 'the different weapons for different enemies' concept that had previously appeared in *Pssst*.



1983
TRANZ AM
Spectrum
Control a Super Blown Red Racer in a post-apocalyptic world as you search for fuel and the coveted "Eight Great Cups of Ultimate". One of the firm's more simplistic efforts, but still fairly engaging.



1984
ATIC ATAC
Spectrum, BBC
Pick from three character classes (knight, serf or wizard) and then make your way around a ghoul-infested castle. The depleting-chicken health display was far more original than an energy bar.



1984
KNIGHT LORE
Spectrum, Amstrad, BBC, MSX
Without a shadow of a doubt this stands as Ultimate's finest hour. The isometric graphics looked astonishing for the time and curing SabreMan of his lycanthropy was no small task.



1985
GUNFRIGHT
Spectrum, Amstrad, MSX
This was another isometric title, but the premise of tracking down a series of wanted gunslingers worked quite well. The showdown sub-game also helped spice things up a bit.

of the most successful releases of its day. What was to come next, though, would make the industry sit up and take notice of the small Ashby de la Zouch-based firm.

The seminal *Knight Lore* arrived towards the end of 1984 and, thanks to a technique known as filmation, provided gamers with an interactive isometric world to explore. Nothing like *Knight Lore* had been seen before on a home machine and it was hailed as revolutionary – the fact it was running on a humble Spectrum 48K was even more impressive. Unsurprisingly, a slew of clones (including various efforts from Ultimate) followed.

END OF AN ERA?

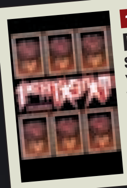
However, the company's star eventually began to fade. It had never really got to grips with the other main machine of the day, the Commodore 64, and its Spectrum output slowly began to decline in quality.

Murmurings from the Ultimate camp suggested that its founders, the enigmatic Stamper brothers, were cautious about investing heavily in further development of 8-bit computer games, especially with the arrival of 16-bit machines looming. Before long the firm had set up a subsidiary company known as Rare which focused on the up-and-coming NES – an 8-bit console system. Shortly afterwards, the name Ultimate was sold to US Gold, who subsequently released a number of mediocre titles (including *Martianoids* and *Bubbler*) under the label. The game was up and it wasn't long before the name Ultimate was finally consigned to the pages of history.

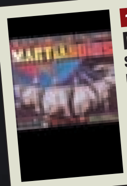
Of course, the Stampers' decision to switch to developing games for the console market proved to be as visionary as Ultimate's early games and Rare went on to become one of the most successful developers in the world. Regardless of the firm's success as Rare, the name Ultimate will always conjure up fond memories among gamers of a certain age.



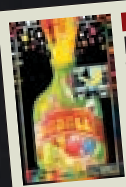
1986
CYBERUN
Spectrum
By now, even the press were beginning to question Ultimate's quality control measures. This underwhelming space shooter did little to reassure critics that all was well within the firm.



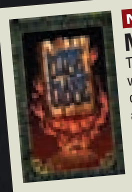
1986
PENTAGRAM
Spectrum, Amstrad, BBC
Yet another isometric adventure. This one featured SabreMan and bore a startling resemblance to *Knight Lore*. Playable enough, but depressingly formulaic. Ultimate's last game before the US Gold era.



1983
MARTIANOIDS
Spectrum, Amstrad, MSX
US Gold was now at the helm and it showed. Aside from the Ultimate name on the packaging, this turgid release had nothing to do with the great company itself. The bottom of the slippery slope was near.



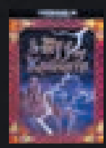
1987
BUBBLER
Spectrum, Amstrad, MSX
Another US Gold effort which, if you'll excuse the horrible expression, proved that the Ultimate bubble had truly burst. But it was good while it lasted, eh? Happy days.



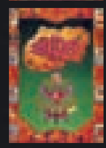
NOT RELEASED
MIREMARE
The much talked about *MireMare* was supposed to be the final chapter of the SabreMan series and was even mentioned in the end sequences of *Pentagram* and *Underwurlde*. Despite the appearance of this cover image, though, the game itself is never supposed to have got any further than the drawing board. Perhaps someone at Ultimate can throw more light on the matter? Watch this space…

THE COMMODORE CONNECTION

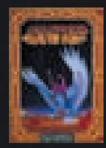
Firebird was responsible for a number of Commodore 64 ports of popular Ultimate games including *Sabre Wulf* and *Underwurlde* although Ultimate itself developed a number of Commodore 64-specific titles. However, these never achieved the commercial or critical success that the firm's other games had enjoyed.



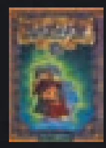
1984
THE STAFF OF KARNATH
The first appearance of Sir Arthur Pendragon was a slightly crude affair, with blocky (albeit colourful) graphics and some fairly illogical puzzles. Undetered, however, Ultimate would use Sir Arthur again (see below…severa times).



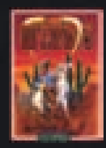
1985
ENTOMBED
Ultimate's second stab at Commodore 64 gaming was an improvement. Sir Arthur had to pass through a number of puzzle-filled rooms. Sadly, the corridor sections linking these chambers proved frustrating to wade through.



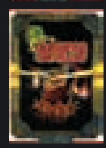
1985
IMHOTEP
This uninspired title provided evidence (not that it was really needed) that Ultimate was not as comfortable on the Commodore 64 as it was with the Spectrum and other systems. But it kept trying…



1985
BLACKWYCHE
The third in the Sir Arthur Pendragon series was set on a large pirate galleon, whose sailors had been searching for the Crystal Skull of Souls. It sounded sinister but unfortunately wasn't as good as *Entombed*.



1986
OUTLAWS
The cleverly-named Lone Rider arrived to avenge, er, those who needed avenging. Sadly, this was a massively disappointing Wild West action/adventure and one which most Ultimate fans would rather forget.



1986
DRAGONSKULLE
Sir Arthur Pengragon, having successfully tracked down the Skull of Souls in *Blackwyche*, carried on adventuring. Thankfully, this would be his final outing. Unlike SabreMan, he wouldn't be missed.

COMPILATIONS

Two dedicated Ultimate compilations also made it out, although no comprehensive collection has ever been released.



ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME: THE COLLECTED WORKS.
Released in association with *Crash* magazine, this Spectrum compilation was not a complete collection of Ultimate games but you did get 11 quality titles.



COSMIC BATTLEZONES
A tragically named BBC-only compilation featuring *Jetpac*, *Lunar Jetman* and *Alien 8*. The cover art offended many Ultimate purists. A bit rubbish, really.

GREAT GAME BOSSES

T-REX IN JOE & MAC CAVEMAN NINJA

Although dinosaurs and cavemen never coexisted in real life, in videogames they've met many times through the years. Here's one of the most memorable man-and-beast encounters



When the SNES first went on sale there were many games that impressed; *F-Zero* with its futuristic Mode 7 landscapes, *Super Soccer* with its pseudo 3D pitch, and, of course, *Super Mario World* with its clean, contemporary visuals and abundant use of sprite scaling. But there was another game that stood out for its blended pastel colour palette and huge dinosaur bosses. That game was *Joe & Mac Caveman Ninja*.

Based on the coin-op of the same name, *Joe & Mac* certainly looked impressive, though fans of the arcade game were keen to point out that this console conversion featured numerous omissions – though that was hardly Data East's fault.

Even with these cutbacks, though, the terrifying roar of a T-Rex, followed by the earthquake-like tremors caused by its footsteps, was enough to strike fear into the heart of the hardest gamers. Having casually traipsed past the sleeping beast just seconds earlier, it was obvious that an attack was imminent, though the tense music and rumbling snarls still managed to shock. But surely two little cavemen wouldn't be capable of bringing down a creature of such magnitude would they? On the contrary, it was easy to crush the angry dinosaur simply by clubbing it in the face. And if you'd managed to collect a weapon upgrade on your way through the level it was even easier – even with enemy cavemen leaping (somewhat implausibly) out of T-Rex's mouth towards you.

So what was it that motivated Joe & Mac to go out dinosaur hunting in the first place? Why, it was to save the gorgeous cave babes, of course…

VIDEOGAMES MYTHS

An intriguing batch of combat game cobblers

STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR

Videogame myths have been knocking around since the days of *Pong*. However, when Capcom released *Street Fighter II* in 1991 a whole flood of facts and fancies started flowing.

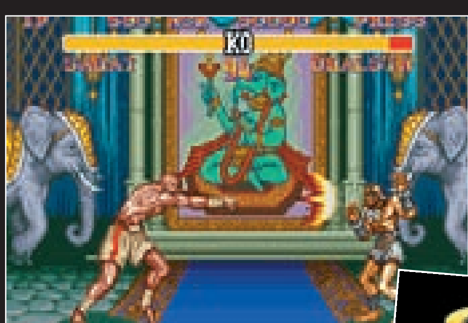
It's fair to say that *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* was a phenomenon. Not since the golden age of coin-ops when *Pac-Man* and suchlike were doing the rounds had an arcade machine been so popular. As players became more and more skilled at the game they began to demand more, and before long a number of rumours started doing the rounds – most of which proved to be a pack of ill-conceived (and daft) lies.

To list them all you'd need pages, but some of the more popular ones included the so-called Super Fireball. Those of you who played the game enough may have noticed that from time to time Ryu and Ken's Hadoken attack would appear in an orangey red form. It was suggested that this was a more powerful strike, but in reality it was simply a graphical glitch (as confirmed by the developers). Case closed.

Then you had the classic 'if you complete the game without losing any energy you can select the four bosses as playable characters'. After much time and money had been spent it emerged that this was a big fat dirty lie.

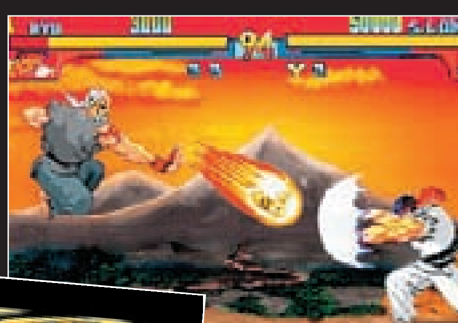
Best of all though was the story circulated by American magazine *EGM*. As an April Fool's joke, the magazine ran an article (complete with a dodgy doctored image) which appeared to show a hidden character in action. The fighter in question was Sheng Long, the supposed mentor of Ryu and Ken (the name Sheng Long was incidentally included in Ryu's victory speech). *EGM* explained that in order to unlock this character you had to reach M. Bison without getting hit and then go nine (count 'em) rounds without either you or Bison hitting each another. Of course this was utter guff, but that didn't stop people trying, and one or two rival publications were left with egg on their faces (or should that be covers?) after plagiarising the story.

The hoax was later revived by *EGM* when it claimed that Sheng Long was included in *Street Fighter III: The New Generation* (again this turned out to be untrue). The one that really bakes our noodle is whether Capcom intentionally included combos in *Street Fighter II*. We suspect not, but hey, who are we to judge?



Later versions of the game let you play as characters such as Sagat, but there was still no truth in the rumour that completing the game without losing any energy let you 'be' all four bosses.





Look! It's Sheng Long in *Street Fighter III* (if you fall for this then let us know – we've got some 'magic beans' we'd like to sell you).







▲ "I'm 47, my girlfriend's 33, she's 14 years younger than me. Back of the net!"

STAR GAMES!

After bouncing back with the third best slot on Radio Norwich, Alan Partridge lets off steam with Dancing Stage Euromix and House Of The Dead 2. Cashback

We're no strangers to the world of arcades and we've seen some strange things in our time, but the last thing you'd expect to find as you stroll through the noisy neon ballroom is a washed-up celebrity hogging all the good games. After being turned away from 'friends', clubs and parties alike, Alan Partridge goes to drown his sorrows in some digital entertainment.

The first shot we see is a close-up of Alan's face bathed in a warm, friendly glow, and as the camera pans out it becomes apparent that he's bitten off more than he can chew with a particularly tricky song on *Dancing Stage Euromix*. On closer inspection, however, the slow-moving arrows and simple pattern on the screen blow that theory out of the water and present a new one – Partridge has all the quick-stepping ability of a rhino.

The strained stomping continues for a while before the scene cuts to the celebrity's second game of choice, *House Of The Dead 2*. There are two different shots of his undead-blasting antics: one shows Alan paired with a young boy, the two players sporting equally colourful replica pistols; while the other portrays a solo experience, spiced up with frustrated exclamations ("shitty zombies!") and the kind of flailing often seen in over-excited children.



Later in the episode, Alan proceeds to recount his gaming achievements for his new Lexus-driving friend's wife in his inimitable manner. "Tried to outdance a computer – impossible – then fought some zombies with a boy in care," he explains, adding with his trademark zing: "Wiped the floor with him."

As is almost always the way, though, a gaming faux pas manages to slip through the net. While Alan is abusing *HOTD2*'s zombies, the replica gun he's flinging around is nothing to do with Sega, belonging, in fact, to Namco's *Crisis Zone*. We're not sure what's worse – the fact that this error made it onto national television or the fact that we recognised that blue plastic SMG within seconds…

Sadly, for the rest of Alan's television and radio career we're never given another insight into his gaming habits. Shame, really – we'd love to see him try to get to grips with an EyeToy or, better still, *Super Monkey Ball*. Anyone for Monkey Tennis?

STREET FIGHTER



- Arcade/Multi
- 1987
- Not a particularly huge hit, *Street Fighter* had just two playable characters. But it did boast pressure-sensitive pads that governed the strength of your punches and kicks depending on how hard you hit them. Sadly, they were easily broken.

POCKET

STREET FIGHTER II



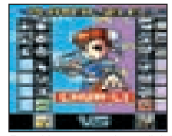
- Game Boy
- 1995
- Despite its monochrome display, Nintendo's chunky little handheld actually did quite a good job of recreating the arcade original. Sadly, a lack of animation made the action look somewhat jerky and fragmented.

STREET FIGHTER 2010



- NES
- 1990
- One of the most abstract instalments in the *Street Fighter* series, this starred Ken as a scientist in the year 2010. The game was very playable, with side-scrolling levels and intricate combat that allowed interaction with the scenery.

SNK VS. CAPCOM: MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM



- Neo-Geo Pocket Color
- 1999
- Thanks to the power of SNK's handheld, this mimicked SNK and Capcom's game extremely well. Everything was cut down slightly, and the characters were super-deformed to make them easier to see.

MANGA

CUTESY

STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR



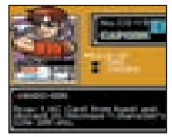
- Arcade/Multi
- 1991
- This was the title that propelled the *Street Fighter* series into the limelight. With eight playable characters, plenty of balanced moves, locations all around the world, and a decent home conversion on the SNES, this was a classic.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: TURBO REVIVAL



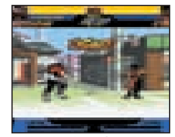
- GBA
- 2001
- With ropey controls and awful music, this was a real low point for the series, especially as the SNES and Mega Drive conversions were so much better. This also featured an uncomfortable mix of *Super* and *Alpha* art styles.

SNK VS. CAPCOM CARD FIGHTERS CLASH



- Neo-Geo Pocket Color
- 1999
- SNK capitalised on the *Pokémon*-induced trading-card craze with release of the *SNK Vs. Capcom Card Fighter's Clash* series. Three variations were available and the action was strictly turn-based card battling.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA



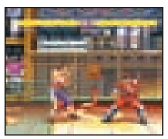
- GBC
- 2000
- Despite being a competent machine, the Game Boy Color couldn't do justice to a game that was famous for its manga-style characters. British developer Crawfish had used all the power available, however, and this was still very playable.

POCKET FIGHTER



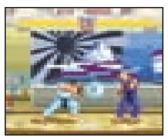
- Wonderswan
- 2000
- Although Bandai's Wonderswan was never available in the UK, it built up quite a following in Japan. Capcom's cutesy beat-'em-up, *Pocket Fighter*, translated well to the machine, though it was only available in monochrome.

STREET FIGHTER II: CHAMPION EDITION



- Arcade/Multi
- 1992
- This was almost the same as *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior*, though there were slight tweaks and players were now allowed to use the four boss characters. Each of the backgrounds had also been updated with new colours.

STREET FIGHTER II TURBO: HYPER FIGHTING



- Arcade/Multi
- 1992
- Many fans consider this the best in the series thanks to its speed and combos. Nintendo signed the game as a SNES exclusive, but Capcom got around the deal by simply renaming it *Special Champion Edition* for the Mega Drive.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3



- GBA
- 2002
- The GBA conversion of *Street Fighter Alpha 3* was stunning. With 38 playable fighters, sublime animation and flawless control, it was a real shame to see Crawfish go bankrupt after such a great translation.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE TOURNAMENT BATTLE



- Arcade
- 1993
- With four arcade cabinets linked together, *The Tournament Battle* allowed eight players to test their skills. Unfortunately, players had to move between machines between fights meaning that any credits in the machine were lost.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE NEW CHALLENGERS



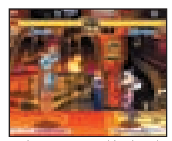
- Arcade/Multi
- 1993
- Featuring four new fighters – Cammy, T. Hawk, Fei Long and Dee Jay – *Super Street Fighter* was supposed to be the next evolution in the series. However, the speed had been reduced dramatically and fans weren't impressed.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO



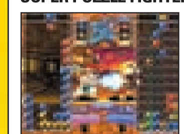
- Arcade/Multi
- 1994
- After so many complaints about the speed of *Super Street Fighter*, Capcom hurriedly addressed the problem as well as introducing super moves just like those in *Darkstalkers* (which was also released in 1994).

DARKSTALKERS



- Arcade/Multi
- 1994
- Showcasing Capcom's new manga art style, *Darkstalkers* was a test game for *Street Fighter Alpha*. Featuring air blocking and super moves, this played a lot like *Street Fighter* (apart from its numerous enhancements, obviously).

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO



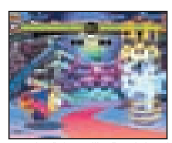
- GBA
- 2003
- Based on the cult arcade hit, this *Tetris*-like puzzle game converted well to the Game Boy Advance; quite an impressive feat considering that the original game was running on Capcom's powerful CPSII arcade board.

STREET FIGHTER THE MOVIE



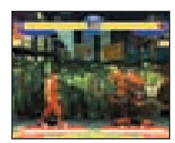
- Arcade/Multi
- 1995
- Based on the film of the same name, this was possibly the worst game of the entire *Street Fighter* series. With digitised fighters like those from *Mortal Kombat*, even the classic gameplay couldn't save this awful game.

NIGHT WARRIORS: DARKSTALKERS' REVENGE



- Arcade/Multi
- 1995
- Like *SFII: Champion Edition*, this was merely an upgrade of *Darkstalkers* with remixed colours and playable boss characters. By now, popular fighters like Demitri and Morrigan were becoming an established part of the series.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA: WARRIORS' DREAMS



- Arcade/Multi
- 1995
- Taking the series back to basics, *Street Fighter Alpha*'s story was set before the original *Street Fighter* game. This title sported a new manga look and a handful of characters from older Capcom games, including Guy from *Final Fight*.

CUTESY

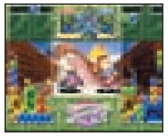
3D

VERSUS

ANNIVERSARY

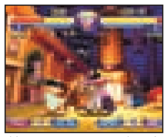
Seventeen years old and still going strong – the Street Fighter series has a long and distinguished history

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER



- Arcade
- 1996
- Cashing in on the *Street Fighter* phenomenon, *Puzzle Fighter* was a simple puzzle game in which the aim was to link coloured jewels together. Super-deformed characters threw kicks and punches each time you were successful.

POCKET FIGHTER



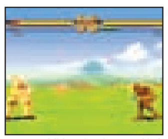
- Arcade/Multi
- 1997
- Taking the super-deformed characters from *Super Puzzle Fighter* and blending them with the traditional *Street Fighter* gameplay, this cutesy one-on-one beat-'em-up was a nice variation on the standard game.

STREET FIGHTER EX



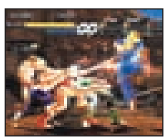
- Arcade/PSone
- 1996
- This was Capcom's attempt to take *Street Fighter* into three dimensions, and despite a lot of attention *EX* lacked the precision or responsiveness of its predecessors. Worse still, a lack of polygons meant the fighters looked blocky.

STREET FIGHTER EX 2



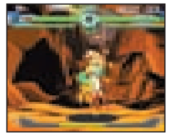
- Arcade/PSone
- 1998
- After the disappointingly geometric *Street Fighter EX*, the sequel to Capcom's 3D beat-'em-up was certainly far prettier, boasting many additional polygons. Unfortunately, the gameplay was just as spongy and unresponsive.

STREET FIGHTER EX 3



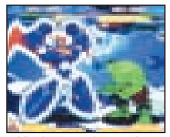
- PS2
- 2000
- Like many PS2 launch titles, this really didn't show off what Sony's new machine was capable of. With garish graphics, slowdown aplenty and questionable dynamics, this really wasn't any better than its predecessors.

X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER



- Arcade/Multi
- 1996
- After successfully bringing the X-Men to life in *Children Of The Atom*, Capcom spiced things up with the introduction of *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter*. The game allowed you to choose two fighters and switch between them mid-match.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES VS. STREET FIGHTER



- Arcade/Multi
- 1997
- Following on from *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter*, this offered the same two-on-two gameplay with a selection of new characters. However, while the gameplay was just as good the backgrounds weren't as creative or polished.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM



- Arcade/Multi
- 1998
- Continuing the now popular two-on-two gameplay of the *Vs.* series, *Marvel Vs. Capcom* expanded the formula by offering a wider range of characters, including an enormous selection from Capcom's impressive history.

CAPCOM VS. SNK



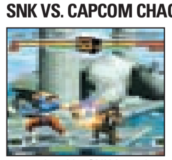
- Arcade/Multi
- 2000
- Teaming up with long-term rival SNK, this Capcom offering allowed players to match up fighters from their favourite SNK and Capcom series. This really kept 2D fighting games alive in a 3D-dominated market.

CAPCOM VS. SNK 2



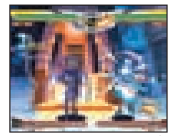
- Arcade/Multi
- 2001
- Although this didn't really offer anything new, the fact that it's been translated to so many formats has helped to keep Capcom's 2D games in the limelight. Sadly, the standard controls have been simplified, though they can be adjusted.

SNK VS. CAPCOM CHAOS



- Arcade/Multi
- 2003
- Developed by SNK, this only featured one-on-one matches and had a grungier look than Capcom's clean, manga style art of late. Although appreciated by SNK fans, the company has produced better-quality games in the past.

VAMPIRE SAVIOR



- Arcade/Multi
- 1997
- The third and final instalment in the *Darkstalkers* series, this featured some new characters and moves. Several Japanese arcades featured an updated version (*Vampire Savior 2*), while the Sega Saturn received a superb conversion.

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2



- Arcade/Multi
- 1999
- More of the same, *Marvel Vs. Capcom 2* arrived in the arcade just one year after its predecessor and was converted to the Dreamcast. More recently, the game appeared on the Xbox though some gamers claimed it lacked the arcade charm.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2



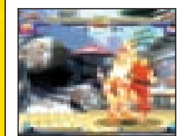
- Arcade/Multi
- 1996
- Despite its revamped look, the original *Alpha* game only featured a handful of characters and backgrounds. *Alpha 2* rectified this somewhat and looked even more beautiful thanks to additional detail and animation.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3



- Arcade/Multi
- 1998
- With just about every *Street Fighter* character included, this was the definitive game in the *Alpha* series. Unfortunately, while it played well and looked fantastic, the musical compositions were mostly bland and uninspired.

STREET FIGHTER III: NEW GENERATION



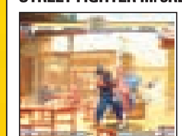
- Arcade/Dreamcast
- 1997
- Despite its stunning animation and clever parrying system, *Street Fighter III* wasn't particularly well received due to its lacklustre line-up of characters and the removal of certain special moves.

STREET FIGHTER III: 2ND IMPACT



- Arcade/Dreamcast
- 1998
- Rectifying many of the gripes that fans had with *Street Fighter III: New Generation*, it was unfortunate that *2nd Impact* arrived so close to *Alpha 3*. This and its predecessor were available in a Dreamcast double pack.

STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE

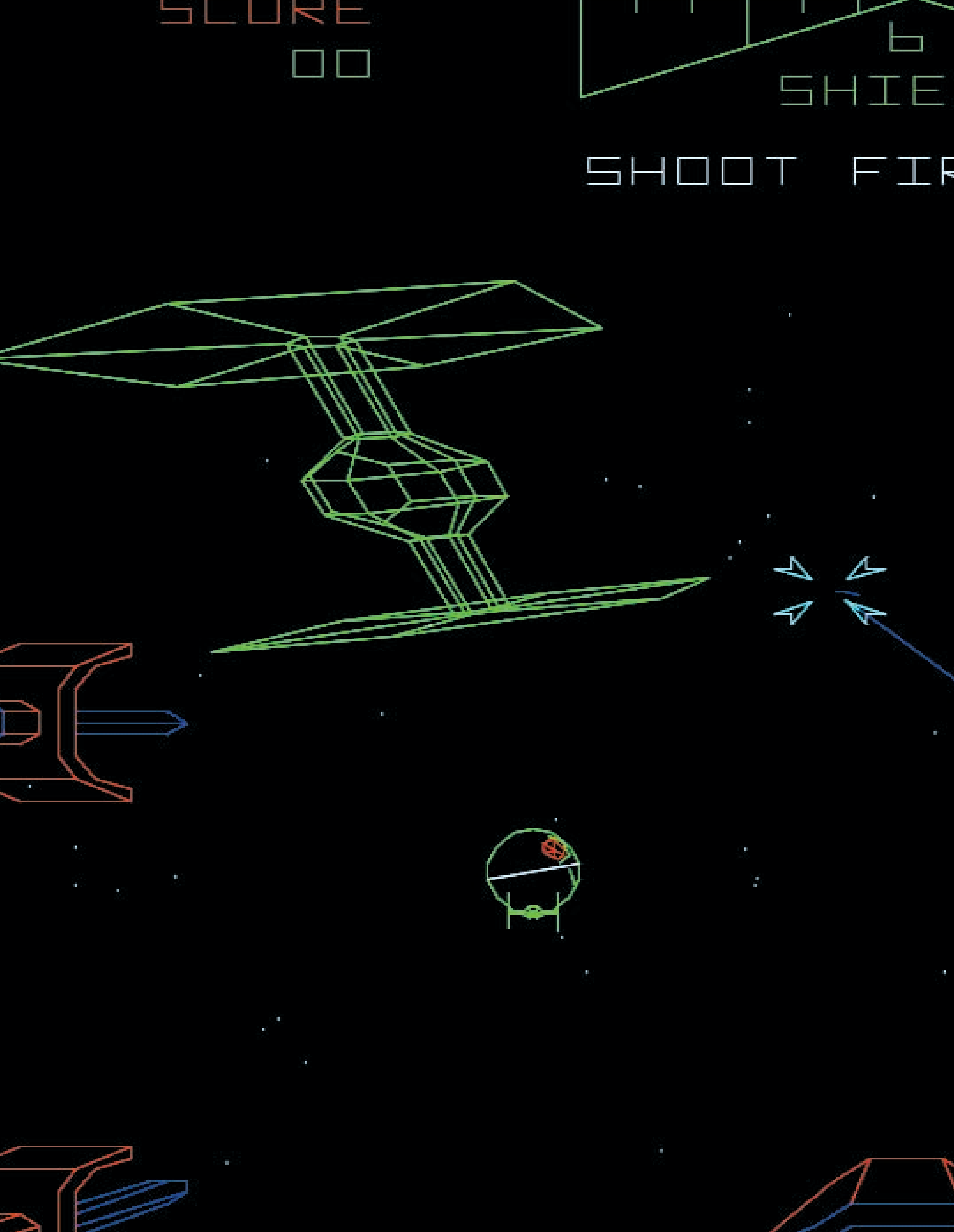


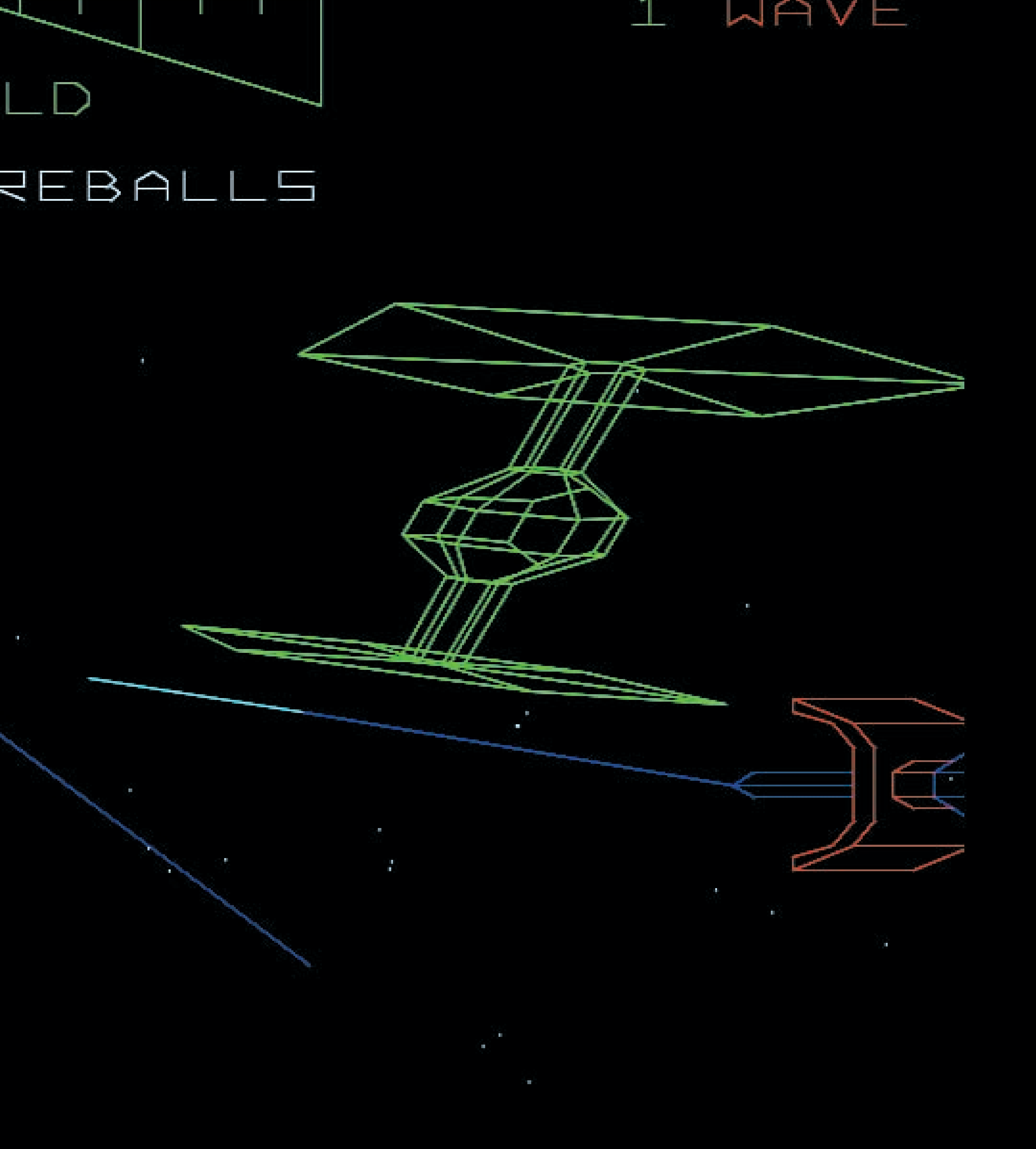
- Arcade/Dreamcast
- 1999
- With a far healthier range of characters, improved backgrounds and tighter gameplay, Capcom finally got it right with *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. Sadly, it arrived so late in the series that gamers had moved on to titles like *Tekken*.

HYPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE ANNIVERSARY EDITION

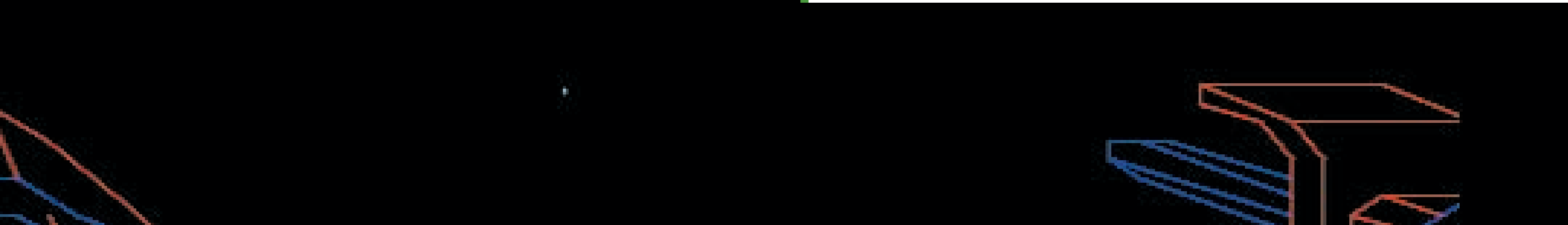


- PS2/Arcade
- 2003
- Featuring all the moves and characters from *SFII: The World Warrior, Champion Edition, Turbo: Hyper Fighting, Super SFII* and *Super SFII Turbo*, this should be the definitive pack for all *Street Fighter* fans. You win!


SCORE
00
6
SHOOT



A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away… **Star Wars – Arcade [Atari] 1983**



I, ROBOT

A GAME THAT WAS SO AHEAD OF ITS TIME, THE PUBLIC JUST COULDN'T KEEP UP

Format: Arcade
Release: 1983
Publisher: Atari
Developer: In-House

In the early Eighties, Atari had a vision. Eager to push the gaming boundaries further than ever before, it was the company's dream to create a polygonal driving game. When it became obvious that current hardware wasn't up to the task though, Atari took a change of direction and *I, Robot* became a reality (incidentally, it took until the 1989 release of *Hard Drivin'* for Atari to get its polygonal racer).

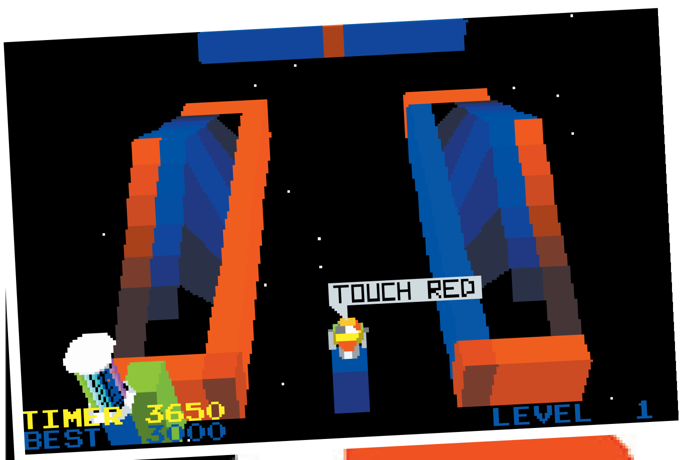
Created by Dave Theurer – the brain behind *Tempest* – *I, Robot* was initially called *Ice Castles*, though this was later changed when Theurer added an Orwell-esque storyline. Players were cast in the role of Unhappy Interface Robot #1984 who was rising up against Big Brother and his many Evil Eyes. Each Evil Eye guarded the entrance to a pyramid and was protected by a shield that could only be penetrated by turning all the red spaces on the playing field blue. On top of this, players had to avoid the game's many enemies, and the huge Evil Eyes would destroy you if you jumped whenever they turned red.

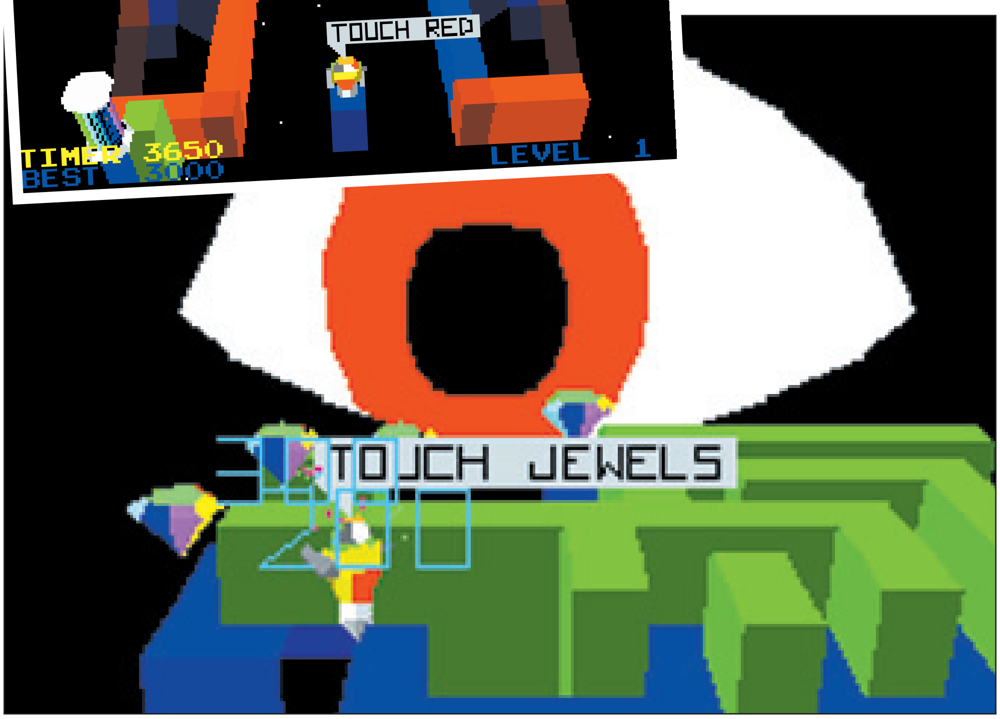
Once the shield was deactivated, it was a simple task to hop over to the pyramid and prepare for the next stage. A smaller sub-level that would see your Unhappy Interface Robot flying into space separated each level of the game and had you destroying as many objects as you could before returning to Earth.

While the game sounded simple on paper, witnessing it in action was another matter entirely, and even now *I, Robot* is still a striking (albeit simple looking) title. While polygons had already featured in earlier games, *I, Robot* was the first title to ever feature flat-shaded, polygon graphics complete with no hidden surfaces. Indeed, when you consider that popular games of the time were *Mr Do's Castle*, *SpyHunter* and *Bank Panic*, you realise just how ambitious *I, Robot* really was. But although Atari may have created a historically important piece of work, the public weren't ready for *I, Robot*'s unique look or its demanding gameplay and the game was a commercial disaster.

Still, for the hardcore gamers that did understand it, *I, Robot* proved to be an immensely satisfying title that held an astounding amount of depth. Although the very early stages were rather easy to negotiate, your Unhappy Interface Robot soon found itself dealing with all sorts of bizarre hazards, including birds, flying saucers and even huge beach balls.

There were also the ever-present Evil Eyes to consider and should you time a jump incorrectly, a laser would quickly teach you the error of your ways by obliterating your poor robot. At the end of every third level, you would finally gain access to the Evil Eye's pyramid. Once inside, you'd need to collect all the available jewels and defeat the Evil Eye, whilst avoiding the inner pyramid's deadly guardians.





OH, THE JOY

As well as being the first game to use filled polygons, *I, Robot* was also the first machine to use Atari's Hall Effect joystick. Initially conceived as a more reliable replacement for the standard analogue stick of many Atari titles, it actually proved to be the exact opposite and added further to *I, Robot*'s problems. Needless to say, Atari updated the stick and later games that used it tended to be a lot more reliable.



Working out the best way around *I, Robot*'s levels was vital if you wanted to succeed, and as you got deeper into the game the stages became more complex and even included moving platforms. The flying sub-stages did little to detract from the game's toughness, and rather than being simple padding they became just as important (if not more so, for some players) as the main game.

Indeed, when you watch your Robot fly through his polygon surroundings and face off against a huge flying head, you can't help but think that Shigeru Miyamoto might have once played Atari's game and stored a few ideas away in the back of his mind. The comparisons between *I, Robot* and *Star Wing* seem too many to be simply down to coincidence.

I, Robot's final trick – and one that proved just how ahead of its rivals Atari really was – was the way that the playing view could be manipulated in order to increase your score multiplier. By using two buttons, players were able to cycle through 12 different viewpoints – the lower the viewpoint, the higher the score multiplier. The game was always viewed from directly behind your protagonist and only the most battle-hardened and skilled *I, Robot* players could make any sort of progress when the game was set on its highest multiplier.

For all its innovative visuals and ideas, *I, Robot* proved to be too much for the average gamer and it never achieved the success it deserved. Even if it had become a hit, Atari's reliance on the 6116 RAM chip that was placed in every *I, Robot* board proved to be another contributing factor in the game's downfall, due to many boards continually breaking down (though to be fair, the RAM was just one of many hardware problems *I, Robot* suffered).

It may have been shunned on its release, but *I, Robot* is quite simply a stunning technical and gaming achievement, and fully deserves to be regarded as one of the greatest retro games ever.

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

WELCOME TO DOODLE CITY

Doodle City **was an interesting extra that was essentially a paint program that enabled you to play about with all the game's polygons. This 'ungame' let you spin objects on three different axes, select six orbit patterns for your chosen shapes to follow and even record what you had created. It was also possible to use whatever time you had left to return to the main game. Unsurprisingly, *Doodle City* was a bit of a non-starter with gamers and many felt annoyed that they had spent a whole credit on what was little more than a time-wasting diversion.**





Presentation: Sparse but slick, with the option of two game modes	**85%**
Graphics Outstanding visuals that still hold up today	**97%**
Sound Very basic, yet still atmospheric	**78%**
Gameplay Extremely well put-together with plenty to learn	**95%**
Lifespan There's a massive amount of levels to negotiate	**96%**
OVERALL	**93%**



AMU YOUR

CALL US NOSTALGIC FOOLS, BUT ARCADES AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE. SO HERE'S OUR GUIDE TO THE WAYS YOU CAN RELIVE THOSE CHERISHED MEMORIES OF YOUTH IN THE PRIVACY OF YOUR OWN HOME

MEMORIES

For many gamers there was something magical about standing in a smoke-filled arcade, watching the local hard man chain-smoke his way through 20 Marlboros while clocking up an insanely high score on *Defender*.

But with arcades now much more family-oriented and old-school gamers now having a bit of disposable income it's little wonder that many 20- and 30-somethings are buying the very machines and games that ate all their ten-pence pieces. Of course, there's a lot more to arcade collecting than simply going into your local specialist store and asking for a mint-condition *Space Invaders* cabinet. Fortunately, we're here to walk you through all the ins and outs of this rapidly expanding hobby.

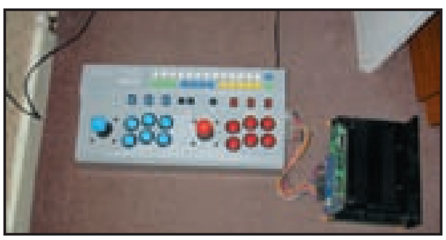
GUN OR CAB?

There are two ways of bringing the magic of the arcades back into your home. One route is to simply plump for an actual arcade cabinet, the other is to pick up a console known as a Supergun that's designed to play arcade boards. And as you'd expect, both ways have their own strengths and weaknesses.

The greatest advantage of a Supergun is its size and handy ability to be used on a standard TV (as long as your TV is NTSC compatible). Often

RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION
Arcades At Home

SE SELF


▲ This Supergun might not look like much, but it's the path to arcade joy.

extremely compact, a Supergun can be easily stored and taken out whenever it's needed, unlike a full-size arcade cabinet. It's also possible to wire all manner of different joysticks up to a Supergun, so if you're not happy with the ones supplied you can always use a PSone or SNES pad, or even a Dreamcast arcade stick. While it would be possible to use pads from current consoles, their reliance on rumble features and analogue buttons would mean that they'd require plenty of extra circuitry to get working and, as a result, are best left to the experts.

While Superguns are generally considered a good place to start, they're also used by experts as test rigs due to the fact that they allow much easier access to a PCB board than a standard cabinet. A real connoisseur will often skip the Supergun and go straight to the cabinets they remember using in their youth. But a whole host of pitfalls are waiting to catch out the unwary or over-eager buyer, so a cautious approach needs to be taken.

STOP QUIT, JAMMA TIME

One of the most common cabinets available is the standard three-button JAMMA cab. They're relatively easy to get hold of and can be bought reasonably cheaply, providing that you go for a generic, mass-produced model. Cabinets, however, do have many more disadvantages when compared to Superguns. They're incredibly heavy, can take up a huge amount of floorspace and, if you're after a specific machine, can work out to be horrifically expensive. If you do have a millionaire's mansion, though, it's definitely the machine of choice, as not even a Supergun can recreate the tactile joy of standing up in front of your very own machine.

Once you've chosen your machine, the next task is to get some games for it. JAMMA is by far the most common type of board. The name stands for Japanese Amusement Machine Manufacturers' Association, and any JAMMA board can be used in a JAMMA-compatible cabinet. JAMMA itself didn't come into production until 1986 when it was created in an attempt to bring some standardisation to the arcade scene, so early titles like *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man* are not initially compatible. Fortunately, these games and many others can be converted to JAMMA using a loom, which is a collection of wires used to connect PCB boards to JAMMA cabinets.

TONY RYDER
MANAGER OF RAVEN GAMES

How long have you been making Superguns and what are their benefits over arcade machines?

We have been making the Supergun for around 13 years. After seeing how poor the original Hong Kong machines were, we decided to make our own. The Supergun's biggest benefit is its size – it's roughly the size of a PlayStation and you simply plug the PCBs into it. Cabinets are great if you have the room but it's hard to find new ones nowadays.

What's the demand like for Superguns and PCB boards in general?

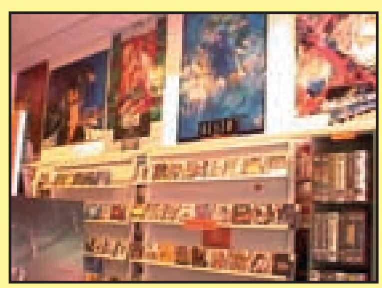
For us, it's our best-selling machine, with the Atari Jaguar second. Customers don't come to us for PlayStation2s or Xboxes as they can be bought from the high street.

What do you feel about the easy access to emulations like MAME on the PC and Xbox? Are gamers favouring it over proper collecting?

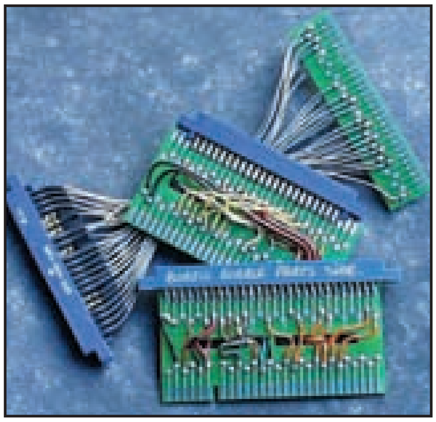
No, not at all. MAME is a great way to see a load of old games you might never have had the chance to play before, but it can sometimes suffer from various problems like poor sound. You tend to find that the true collectors prefer the original PCBs. Playing on a PC is also nothing like playing the same game with an arcade joystick.

What are the most requested PCB boards and how often do they appear?

Top sellers tend to be *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, The Simpsons, Splatter House, Golden Axe, Aliens* and *R-Type*. Games like *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* and *Strider* are now very rare, due to the fact that when *Street Fighter II* became so popular many of the CPS boards were destroyed to make copy clone boards.



AMUSE YOURSELF





▲ That up there on the left is a loom, which you'll need if you want to play certain games. Or you could buy some full-size cabinets. Hey, it's your money.

With later games requiring more than three buttons it's necessary to buy a harness in order to wire up the additional buttons. Looms or harnesses are also needed if you wish to use later board designs such as the Neo-Geo MVS or Sega's 32-bit ST-V hardware (basically a Saturn-based PCB). Arcade collectors also face other problems like the dreaded 'suicide battery', a limited-life battery found on many CPSII boards and on Sega PCBs like *Golden Axe* and *Shinobi*. Fortunately, this and many other problems can now be easily fixed, providing that you know where to go.

Thanks to the wonder of the internet, solutions for fixing and buying games and machines are now only a few clicks away. There are many dedicated sites around, but few contain the sheer wealth of knowledge of UK-VAC, the United Kingdom's Video Arcade Collector's mailing list. Log onto http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ukvac/ and you'll find an incredibly passionate group of gamers and collectors who can't wait to share their collective knowledge with you. You'll often find items for sale (and plenty of 'wanted' boards and accessories), as well as UK-based advice. Such is their passion and devotion to their hobby they even went so far as to lend many of the exhibits that appeared at recent 'Game On' exhibitions.

GOT DEEP POCKETS?

Now you've made a few decisions, it's simply a case of spending your hard-earned cash. A decent Supergun will cost you around £150 and will normally come supplied with at least one joystick. Cabinets, on the other hand, can cost anything from £100 to a couple of grand, normally due to the fact that the machines are so much older and harder to come by.

It's unsurprising to learn that the likes of *Space Invaders*, *Defender* and *Galaxian*, along with other classics from the mid-Seventies to early Eighties, can end up costing the unwary buyer huge amounts of cash. Indeed, a mint *Defender* cabinet (very hard to find in a decent condition because so many show up with cigarette burns on them) can set you back as much as £2,000. Providing you look in the right places, however, it's sometimes possible to pick up some good bargains.

One of your first choices is eBay, and though prices can vary according to demand, you're often able to pick up a few choice boards for less than £50. There are also plenty of websites dedicated to selling cabinets, Superguns and games, often at very reasonable prices. The likes of www.ravengames.co.uk, www.andys-arcade.net and www.arcadewarehouse.com are all good places to start looking. Be warned, however, as these guys know their stuff and it's unlikely you'll pick up a mint-condition *Space Invaders* for anything less than its actual asking price.

Your last option is to trawl round the many amusement arcades across the country. Although the more popular areas have long been cleaned out by other collectors, it's still possible to come across the odd shop which is more than willing to sell cabinets or boards for a decent price and clear some much-needed (and valuable) space at the same time.

PLAY TIME

After you've saved then spent your hard-earned cash you're ready to revisit one of the most satisfying and enjoyable eras in gaming. But if you find that this golden age of arcade history isn't quite what you were expecting and decide to sell your recently purchased *Pac-Man* machine or that fancy *Space Invaders* cocktail cabinet, you'll find our offices very accommodating…

SPEND, SPEND, SPEND...

While it's possible to pick up certain games relatively cheaply, others will cost you the proverbial arm and a leg. These are a few of the choicest titles.

SPACE INVADERS COCKTAIL CABINET

DEVELOPER: Taito
PRICE: £1,050
For many this is still the daddy of all shooters, but if you want to recreate the joy of blowing up your own bases and hitting that elusive UFO you're going to need over £1,000.

GALAXIAN

DEVELOPER: Midway
PRICE: £995
***Galaxian* was the first colour arcade game and yet another extremely popular shoot-'em-up. Frantic gameplay, devilishly tricky attack waves and a snazzy looking cabinet mean this is well worth the £1,000 asking price.**

DEFENDER

DEVELOPER: Williams
PRICE: £1,495
Only the most hardcore gamers would tackle *Defender* when it was first released in 1980. A multitude of different buttons, incredibly fast gameplay and some frenetic blasting made sure that *Defender* definitely sorted out the men from the boys.

DONKEY KONG

DEVELOPER: Nintendo
PRICE: £400
Miyamoto's original classic costs mere peanuts when compared to the likes of *Defender* and *Pac-Man*. Mario's first ever adventure is still as playable as it ever was and is a must-have for platform fans.

PAC-MAN

DEVELOPER: Midway
PRICE: £1,600
The original videogame hero is getting extremely hard to pin down nowadays, so it's hardly surprising to learn that *Pac-Man* is one of the most expensive machines you can buy.



▲ Alan Tyler in pensive mood. Thinking about games or some sort of soldering device we reckon.

▼ Why have dull necessities like a fridge or, say, a dialysis machine, when you could have one of these beauties in your house.



ALAN TYLER

Arcade collector and fine art lecturer

What made you want to start collecting arcade machines and how long have you been collecting?
I'm a bit of a collector of 'stuff' at the best of times, and I started out collecting game PCBs and machines that I remembered from my formative years, like *Defender*, *Galaxian*, *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids*, *Phoenix* and the like. But as time has passed, I've actually got into earlier game technology – early to mid-Seventies black and white stuff, like Atari's *Starship-1*, Midway's *Sea Wolf*, *Tank* and so on. Like many people, I started out with a single JAMMA cab, although I soon realised that I wanted more, and it's amazing what's out there once you start to look. I've found stuff in people's garden sheds, in barns and stables – all over the place!

How much of a difference has the Internet made to collecting?
There's an amazing knowledge base out there and people are always willing to share what they know in order to keep these machines going. The web has made such a difference to this hobby. Ten years ago it was like some kind of lost art – no one knew anything about these machines or where to get spares. Machines would be trashed purely because they had little or no residual value once they stopped working. Nowadays people are so much better informed and stuff has been (or is being) saved. There are also a lot of people around now who repair arcade machines and PCBs.



▲ Not as glamorous as a cabinet, but it gets the job done.

What do you think of the arcades of today, and why do you think they have changed so much?
I have no great interest in contemporary arcades. I still occasionally visit arcades, but they do very little for me. Current machines often offer something more physically experiential or simulation-oriented rather than just good solid gameplay and it pretty much leaves me cold. I wonder if the resurgence of interest in retro gaming hasn't been some kind of reaction to this. Are people sick of effects-laden novelty and now want to return to a purer form of gameplay?

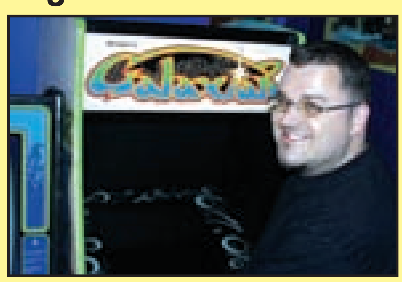
MALCOLM LAURIE

Arcade collector and web designer

What made you want to start collecting arcade machines and how long have you been collecting?
Ever since I first played *Galaxian* in 1980 I knew that I would want to start collecting cabinets for myself. I started with a Supergun and a few PCB boards, but over the last few years have now collected many cabinets, much to the chagrin of my wife.

What are the pros and cons of cabinets compared to Superguns?
Superguns are relatively inexpensive and small, but aren't quite as good as the real thing. For a long time, though, it was all I could afford and all I had space for. To me, standing up playing a beautifully designed cabinet, wrenching the joysticks in a sweaty, psychotic manner simply can't be beaten. The main downside to cabinets is the sheer size and weight of them, especially if you start collecting in earnest.

What's your favourite machine?
Galaxian! The first arcade game I played and it's also the first full-size dedicated arcade cabinet that I acquired. Absolutely timeless and still fantastically compulsive, *Galaxian* sparked a lifelong love of shoot-'em-ups.



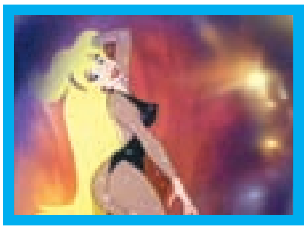
▲ Malcolm with the love of his life (sorry, Mrs Laurie…).

How do you feel about the fact that so many arcade games are now emulated?
Personally, I think it's great. It lets people play many games that simply aren't available to play anywhere else and would otherwise have disappeared forever. For me, it allows me to discover games I'd never heard of before.

LOOK BACK IN ANGER

It might have looked lovely but Dragon's Lair was a nightmare to play. And that really isn't the best way to make a classic game…

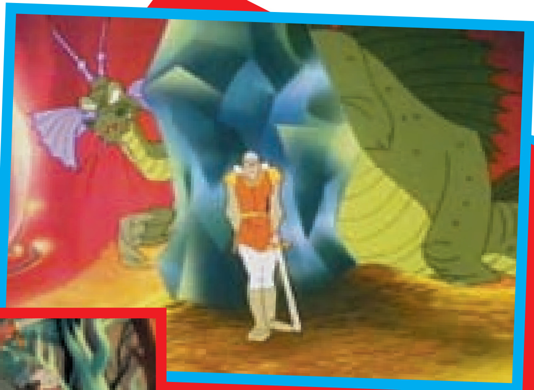
Had you been loitering around arcades back in 1983, you'd have seen an astonishing looking game called *Dragon's Lair*. Grabbing some change from the kiosk, you'd immediately rush over to the machine, shovel in all your cash and quickly realise why no one else was playing it… *Dragon's Lair*'s incredibly cartoon-like visuals (created by ex-Disney animator Don Bluth) came with a very high price – gameplay.



Due to the game using a laser disc instead of the more traditional PCB board, the actual gameplay was incredibly restrictive. *Dragon's Lair* consisted of a series of episodes, each of which involved you making a quick decision by pressing the joystick in one of four directions. Make the right choice and you'd watch hero Dirk successfully negotiate his way through a short cartoon; fail and you'd be privy to one of his many different animated death scenes.

Sure, you may have been given a fair few lives with which to test out the trial and error gameplay, but after seeing Dirk crumble into a pile of bones for what seemed like the hundredth time, you soon realised that *Dragon's Lair* was fool's gold.

Still, there were plenty of masochists out there who did enjoy it and, as a result, *Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp* was released in 1991. Gameplay (if you could really call it that) had made no progress whatsoever and even a new version of the original game – that included several missing screens – entitled *Dragon's Lair: Escape From Singe's Castle*, did little to hide the sheer hollowness you felt when playing this appalling (though undeniably technically important) piece of gaming history.





▲ Great graphics, blahblah, new technology, yaddayadda… who cares? This was terrible.



DON'T GO CHANGING

It may have been funny in *Meet The Parents*, but it was no laughing matter when Fokker was removed from the western release of *Power Stone*

POWER STONE

Born in Indonesia in 1890, Anton Fokker was famous for building the Spin III, as well as other aircraft used by the Germans in the First World War. It perhaps wasn't that surprising, then, that Capcom should choose to use the name Fokker for one of the characters, a pilot, in its Dreamcast beat-'em-up, *Power Stone*. But when the game was translated into English, the character was mysteriously renamed Falcon. Why on earth…?



Our initial thoughts were that Capcom simply wanted to avoid using that name in Europe because of its history, despite the fact that few gamers would know, or even care, that Anton Fokker ever existed.



▲ Ever concerned for our moral wellbeing, Capcom kindly decided to remove the name Fokker in case any unsuspecting gamer mistook it for a rude word.

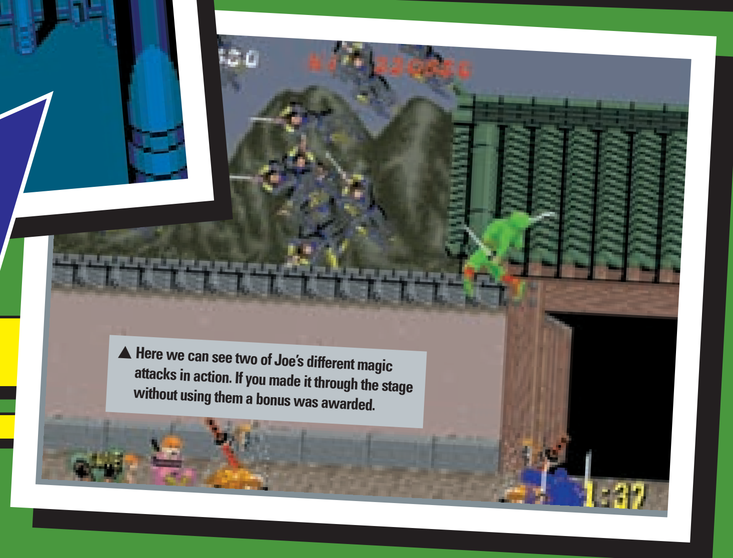
More likely is that the company's American division thought the name was far too close to something rather rude, and removed it to be on the safe side (like western gamers are immature, or something).

Strange really when you consider that fights in *Tekken* could feature Wan Vs King, while Peach Fox Mario was an interesting team in *Super Smash Brothers Melee*. See, we're not immature, are we?



▼ In between each mission a bonus stage appeared where you had to hurl stars at oncoming ninjas. Hit them all and you received a bonus life.





▲ Here we can see two of Joe's different magic attacks in action. If you made it through the stage without using them a bonus was awarded.

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

S•H•I•N•O•B•I

COUNTLESS SEQUELS HAVE FOLLOWED, BUT THE ORIGINAL COIN-OP VERSION OF SHINOBI IS STILL THE BEST

Format: **Arcade**
Release: **1987**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **In-House**

Mention Shinobi to the majority of gamers and they'll probably start ranting on about *The Revenge of Shinobi* (*Super Shinobi* in Japan). Now, we'll admit that this Mega Drive title wasn't a bad game, but that doesn't change the fact that the original 1987 *Shinobi* coin-op will forever remain the defining moment of the series' history.

Sega had already cut its teeth in the scrolling-fighter/action genre in the form of the 1985 title *My Hero*. The firm would revisit such territory in 1987 with *Shinobi* – an improved variant of Namco's excellent *Rolling Thunder*. Whereas in the Namco title you controlled a Special Agent, in *Shinobi* you took charge of Joe Musashi – a shuriken-throwing ninja. Your task was to rescue the kidnapped children of your clan, who'd been whisked away by the mysterious Zeed Corporation.

This involved making your way through five heavily guarded – and, we might add, beautifully designed – stages (or missions, to be precise), each of which was split into a number of sub-levels, the last of which contained a boss character.

Your primary weapon was your unlimited stock of throwing stars, but at points you could collect a powerful gun and, should the situation necessitate it, it was possible to mix it up with close-quarter attacks. Furthermore, ninja magic (which acted like a smart bomb and came in three different flavours) could be used once on each level.

At the time of the game's release, Sega was most famous for pseudo-3D extravaganzas such as *Space Harrier* and *OutRun* which exploited high-end technology and hydraulic cabinets. It was therefore surprising to see the firm release one of the greatest examples of a side-scrolling action game from seemingly nowhere.

Each stage tested both your memory and your reactions, with the varied enemies you encountered challenging your skills in different ways. Scimitar-throwing musclemen, somersaulting ninjas and Spider-Man wannabes were just a sample of the foes you encountered on your way.

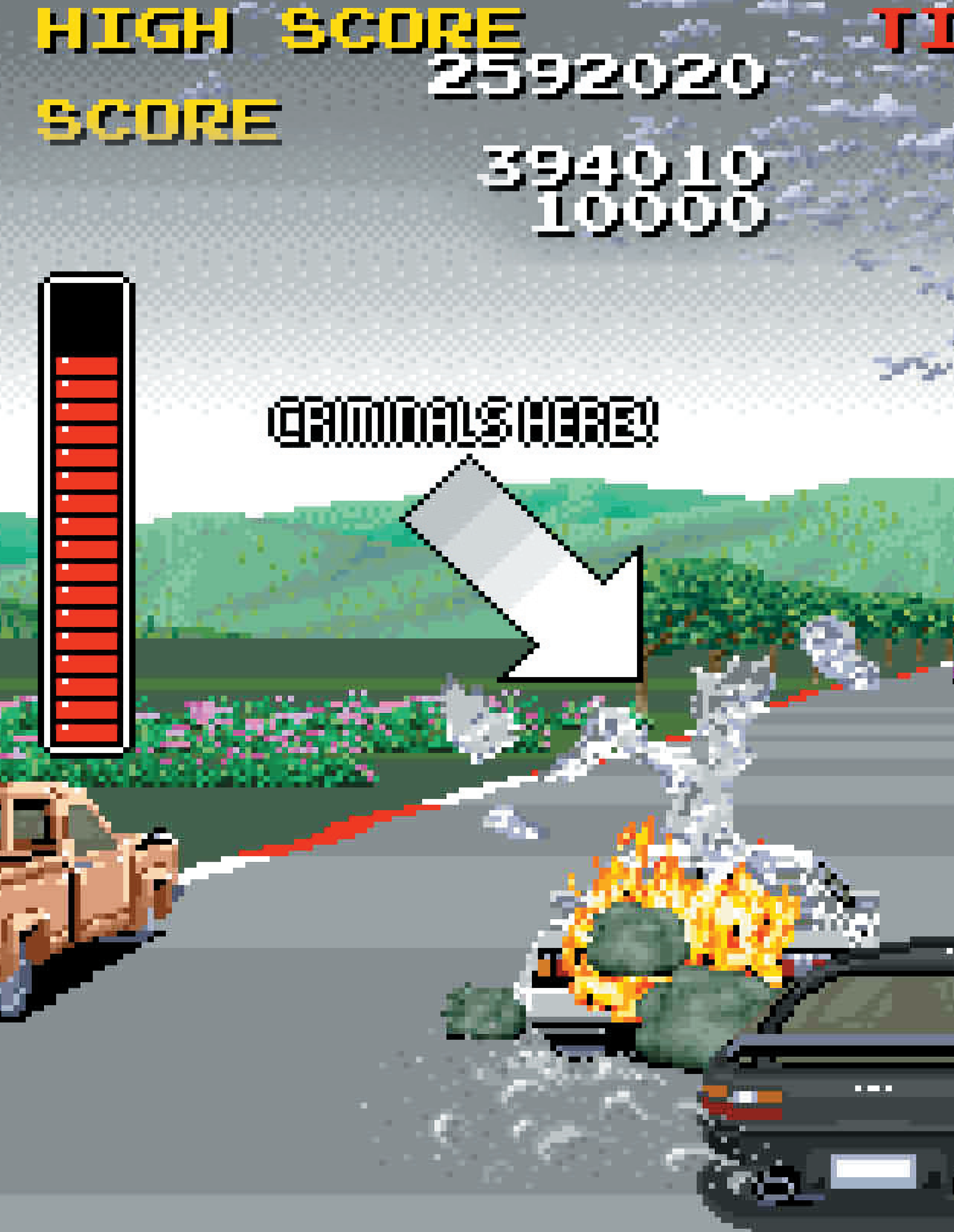
Dual-layer locations also added to the challenge, with both Joe and certain enemies being able to leap between the foreground and background. Perhaps *Shinobi*'s greatest strength was that while it was tough, it was never unfair. To repeat the videogame journalism cliché: "If you died, you knew it was your own fault".

Indeed, while expert players could clear the game with one credit, *Shinobi* was no pushover and compared to, say, *Double Dragon* (where the notorious elbow move made things a doddle), only the most determined of players ever negotiated their way through the torturous fifth mission and defeated the Masked Ninja.

This was a game that got everything right: stylised graphics and audio, a perfect learning curve, well balanced gameplay… it was all here. Sadly, the title never got a perfect home conversion – the PC Engine version was decent but still sorely lacking. Luckily, *Shinobi* arcade boards are quite easy to come by if you fancy trying the real deal.

MAGIC MOMENTS

During each level Joe could use his special ninja magic to get him out of a tricky situation (but only once, mind). These took three different forms, including an electricity burst, a hurricane-style strike and, best of all, a strange spell where lots of clones sped around the screen taking out any foes in the vicinity.


HIGH SCORE
2592020
SCORE
394010
10000
CRIMINALS HERE!



Bad boys, bad boys, watcha gonna do? **Chase HQ – Arcade [Taito] 1988**

Why Don't They Remake...

BIG MEN WITH BIG GUNS – YOU CAN TELL THIS WAS MADE IN THE EIGHTIES

FORGOTTEN WORLDS

Format: **Arcade**
Release: **1988**
Publisher: **Capcom**
Developer: **In-House**

Although it doesn't always come up with the goods nowadays, Capcom was synonymous with excellent arcade games in the late Eighties and early Nineties. While certain titles (*Street Fighter II* and *Final Fight*, for example) fared better than others and quickly rose to dominance in arcades, other games gained more of a cult following despite being just as good as Capcom's higher-profile games.

For many potential punters, *Forgotten Worlds*' awkward looking control system was more than enough to make them take their credits elsewhere in search of a quick blast. Although your character was moved through the scrolling levels via a joystick, his gun was controlled by a dial; while this made for some extremely detailed shooting, it proved to be rather confusing for less hardened gamers. Add to this the fact that huge numbers of enemies (and their bullets) quickly overran you and it was easy to see why *Forgotten Worlds* normally appealed to only the most hardcore arcade players.

This was a real shame, because there was plenty about this game to enjoy. Though the many enemies were rather small, they were all extremely detailed and displayed plenty of imagination and variety (this was especially apparent when you met the impressive bosses). Destroyed enemies would leave behind blue coins (called Zenney) that could be used to buy weapons and equipment from each level's shop.

To many, though, *Forgotten Worlds* was all about the bosses. Indeed, they provided some of the game's highlights – they were all extremely tough to beat and bloody huge to boot. Many of them comfortably filled the entire screen and would take endless volleys before they'd finally succumb to your firepower. Special mention, however, has to go to the giant blue god on Level 3.

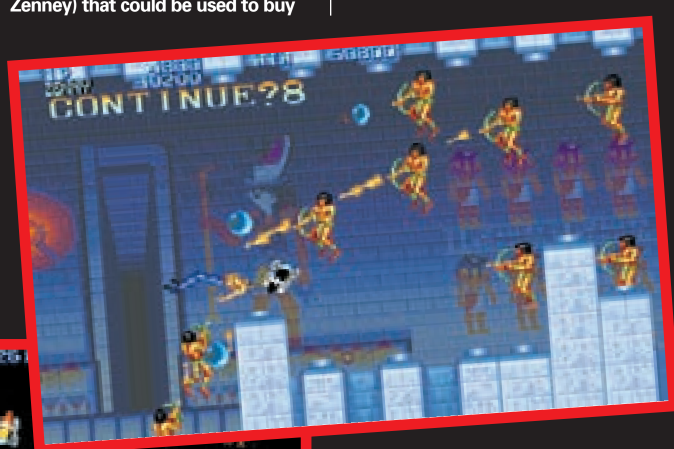
After battling your way through some extremely tough opponents, you'd eventually come across a priest involved in summoning the aforementioned god. As the screen started to scroll upwards, you were immediately overcome by the sheer size of the creature.

Deftly dodging the lasers that shot from his eyes, you were soon filling his face with as much plasma as you could muster. Just when you thought you'd got the upper hand, however, the god's huge fists pummelled you from either side of the screen. Top stuff.

Forgotten Worlds had everything you'd expect from a quality shoot-'em-up; the levels were varied, there were some suitably meaty weapons to buy and the bosses were hard as nails. A quality shooter and no mistake.



▲ Once you'd got the hang of the dial-controlled weaponry a whole world of blasting action was yours to enjoy.



▲ It wasn't just bullets you had to avoid, as these ancient Egyptian archers tried to fill you with arrows. Luckily, being from the future and everything, you had a gun. So you win.



◀ Enemies came from all directions, demanding some quick reactions and trigger-finger work. This was definitely a title for the more hardcore arcade gamers.

MEGA DRIVE MAGIC

Despite the tricky control set-up, *Forgotten Worlds* worked extremely well on the Mega Drive and was a very faithful conversion. Because the Mega Drive pad lacked a dial, your gun was controlled by holding down the B button and using A and C to rotate your weapon left or right. Graphics were of a very high standard and even the bosses were extremely well realised. Despite being in competition with plenty of other shooters on Sega's machine, *Forgotten Worlds* capably held its own.

C·L·A·S·S·I·C C·O·N·S·O·L·E

BUYERS GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

BUYERS GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

3DO

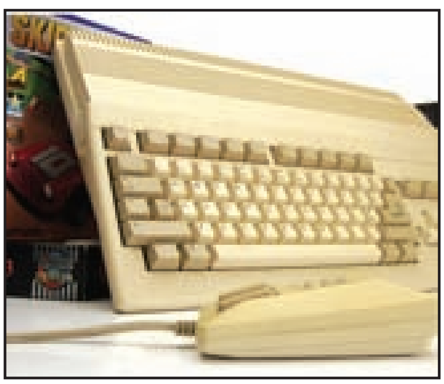
Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50



ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£15
Atari Jaguar	£20-30

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£20-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£115-220
PC Engine GT	£100-200
Super Grafx	£200-300

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£10-25
Mega CD	£40-60
Sega 32X	£30
Nomad	£75-150
Saturn	£20-35
Dreamcast	£20-40

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo-Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system) (prices for multi-slots are higher)	£70
Neo-Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo-Geo CD	£125-175
Neo-Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo-Geo Pocket Color	£30-50



GREAT GAME BOSSES

MARIA: JET SET WILLY

Format: **Spectrum, C64, various 8-bit formats**
Publisher: **Software Projects**
Developer: **Matthew Smith**
Year: **1984**

The videogame universe is populated by some of the most menacing bosses you could imagine. Whether it be huge, chainsaw-wielding zombies, fire-spitting dragons or massive attack ships (probably on fire off the shoulder of Orion), most games chuck some kind of super-tough character in your direction.

However, the memory of all these bosses will be lost in time, like tears in rain, when compared to the sheer terror generated by a rather butch housekeeper known as Maria. Oh yes, as videogame bosses go, Miner Willy's disgruntled housemaid must rank as one of the toughest bosses in the history of videogaming. And we mean tough.

The title she appeared in was, of course, *Jet Set Willy*, where she blocked the entrance to our hero's bedroom. To paraphrase Kyle Reese in *The Terminator*: "Maria was out there! She couldn't be bargained with. She couldn't be reasoned with. She didn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And she absolutely would not stop, ever (well maybe after the game's time limit has expired), until you'd cleaned your newly acquired fancy mansion."



▲ If the game's clock reached midnight the timer reset itself, allowing you to carry on with the task at hand. Handy for slow finishers.

While most bosses give up the ghost after taking a few laser blasts to the head or suchlike, Maria was made of tougher stuff. Before she would make herself scarce, poor Willy (who was suffering from a demon of a hangover) had to collect every piece of rubbish left over from the previous night's raucous party. This meant exploring every last inch of his strange mansion while avoiding its bizarre denizens. Only when every last bit of trash had been collected could Willy retire to the comfort of his bed (not that it turned out that way in the end).

No doubt about it, Maria was an intimidating guardian. But the question that always got us was why didn't Willy save himself all the hassle and just fire her? Answers on a postcard please…



▲ As you entered the Master Bedroom, Maria stood on guard. If you tried to barge past her Willy lost a precious life. Someone should drop a house on that woman.

VIDEOGAMES MYTHS

How one little trailer caused a whole lot of fuss

JETPAC

Some began life in the playground, others were started by magazines. Regardless of their source, though, several famous videogaming myths have cropped up over the years. One of the earliest cruel pranks on gamers was the infamous *Lunar Jetman* trailer hoax. We reveal the truth…

The sequel to Ultimate Play The Game's excellent *Jetpac* arrived in 1984, and was met with high praise from the gaming magazines of the day.

Unlike its predecessor, which was a single-screen affair, *Lunar Jetman* allowed players to explore a vast alien environment in Jetman's Hyperglide Moon Rover. Tantalisingly, the game's cover and loading screen showed the Rover towing a trailer behind it, and before long, rumours started flying around that this trailer was located somewhere within the game. Hours, days and months were spent searching for this mythical vehicle and a cheeky reader even sent an image of it, shown below, to the hallowed *Crash* magazine, who printed it.



▲ Exhibit A: The game's loading screen showing the rover with the trailer in tow. Looks pretty realistic, you might think.



▲ Exhibit B: The fake picture published in *Crash*. To be fair, this wasn't a bad effort for a hoax. We're not sure about the wheels on the trailer, though.

Suffice to say, this added fuel to a fire that was already burning rather well. But the truth was it didn't exist and the image was doctored. The Stamper brothers denied the existence of the trailer and when enthusiasts checked through the game code it was proved once and for all that it wasn't there. Still, for die-hard gamers who were around in the day, the mere sight of the infamous mock-up will rekindle bittersweet memories of all that fruitless searching.

Why Don't They Remake…

WE RECKON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY NEVER GOES OUT OF FASHION

JACK THE NIPPER

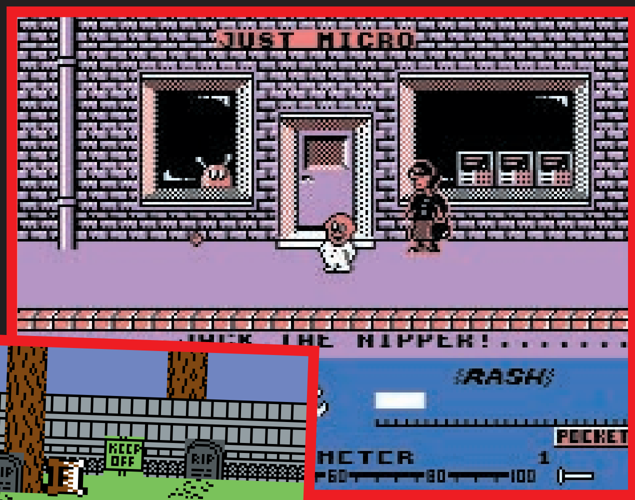
Release: **1986**
Format: **Various Home Systems**
Publisher: **Gremlin Graphics**
Developer: **In-House**

One of the greatest things we enjoy about playing games is that they allow you to do what you could never normally attempt in real life. Take *Jack The Nipper*, for example. Back in 1986 Gremlin Graphics gave you the chance to be bad – very, very bad indeed. The twist, however, was that rather than being in charge of a musclebound soldier complete with a devastating arsenal of weaponry, you were instead placed in the cute romper suit of the eponymous Jack the Nipper.

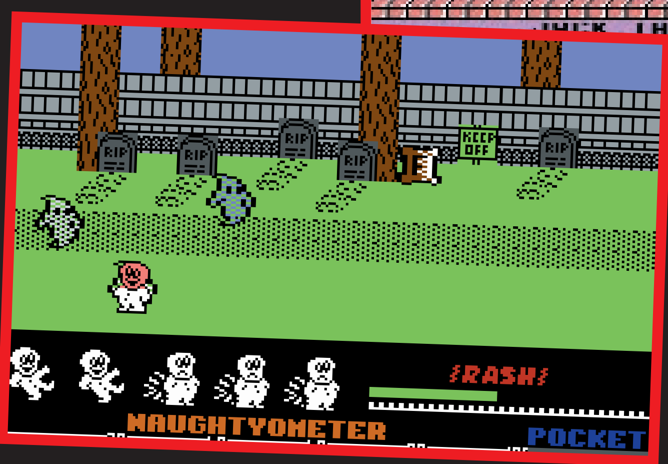
He might have looked like butter wouldn't have melted in his mouth, but Gremlin Graphics' Jack was one of gaming's most devious creations and proved to be a right handful. Set in a town that looked like it had jumped straight from the pages of the *Beano*, the aim of the game was simple – be as naughty as possible. Starting off in the little tyke's room, your first task was to collect your trusty Pea-shooter and assign it to one of your two pockets; then it was time to cause some good old-fashioned mischief.

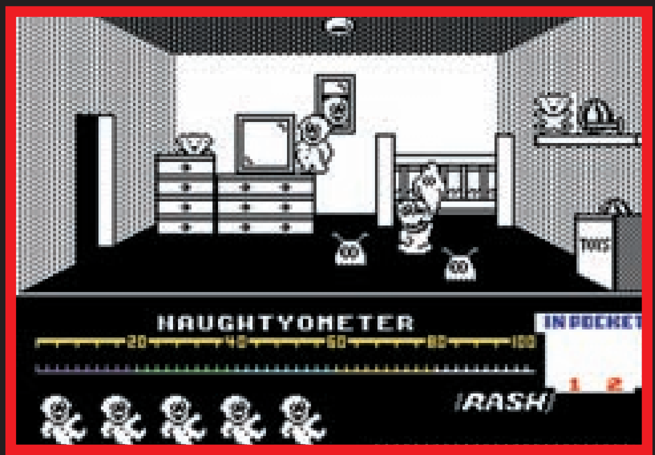
China plates, credit cards, weed killer and glue were just a selection of items that could be picked up, and while they could simply be destroyed by dropping them, creative use boosted your Naughtyometer no end. Make your way over to Gummo's Chomping Molars with the glue and you'd find an assembly line of teeth just waiting to be glued shut. If that wasn't enough, you could frighten cats with horns, cause washing machines to overflow, or even allow prisoners to escape with a well-placed bomb. The pursuit to fill your Naughtyometer was never-ending and the structure of *Jack The Nipper* made it a joy to play.

Of course, all this naughtiness didn't go unpunished and there were plenty of angry shopkeepers, parents and general members of the public around to make sure that your nefarious deeds did not go unpunished. Should you get caught by an angry grown-up (or even a dog or ghost for that matter) Jack's nappy rash would rapidly increase. Once a sound thrashing had been administered five times, it was game over for the little sod.



▲ The pesky little shi… er, spirited young man was free to roam the streets and terrorise local residents. National service, that's what he needs.





▲ Bizarrely, there were ghosts out to get Jack, although a dose of Ritalin would probably do for him too.

The potential for an updated *Jack The Nipper* is endless and this is just the sort of game we'd love to see in three dimensions. Imagine how much trouble we could cause if Jack was let loose in fully destructible environments that were just begging to be taken to pieces. A first-person view would also allow the precocious youngster to fire his Pea-shooter with even greater accuracy than before. And why stop there? He could use a catapult, throw stink bombs… the potential is endless. If it never happens, though, we're more than happy to carry on playing the original.

Coconut Capers

After his shenanigans in the first game, Jack found himself deported to Australia. Not at all keen on this new life, Jack bailed out en route (using his nappy as a parachute) and landed in a jungle, closely followed by his spank-happy dad. Featuring great cartoon visuals and slightly less confusing puzzles, ***Jack The Nipper II: Coconut Capers*** was a worthy follow-up, if less famous than the original.

Retro Feature

Head over heels in love with RETRO

WE MEET THE RETRO SPECIALISTS BRINGING UPDATED CLASSICS TO THE MASSES

The term 'bedroom coder' has been around since the arrival of home computers and was typically applied to trailblazers like Matthew Smith and Jordan Mechner who created gaming masterpieces before hitting the big time. These days, of course, commercial games have large development teams, huge pools of resources and (usually) lots of cash with which to make the next big hit. Spare a thought, then, for the talented individuals of Retrospec – a group of enthusiastic coders, graphic artists and musicians who are not only using the same techniques as gaming legends before them, but are actually remaking their heroes' classic titles for a new generation to enjoy.

Of course, there are plenty of similar groups on the internet, but a host of fantastic conversions and a lively website has ensured that Retrospec is the name that everyone remembers. And even though membership is only open to those who can prove themselves worthy of programming classic updates, the games have found thousands of fans. Now five years old and featuring an impressive library of over 20 games (including *Chuckie Egg, Pssst, Manic Miner* and *Head Over Heels*), Retrospec continues to go from strength to strength; a fact not lost on co-founder Jeff Braine, who remembers the group's early days.

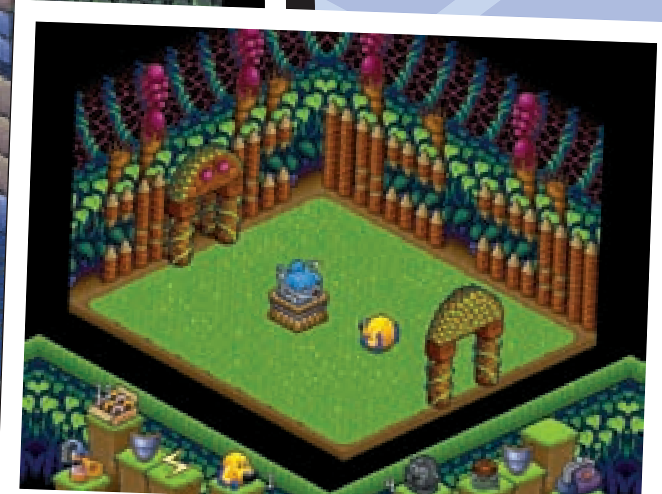
"When we first started out, there were only six of us," he recalls. "John Dow, Rich Jordan, Graham Goring, Andy Noble, a guy called Chris who had a website on game disassemblies and myself. At first, things were fairly slow and I hosted the website on my free 10Mb webspace. As more people joined and left it got harder for me to keep up, and my webspace started filling up as people released more games. By mid 1999 there were at least ten of us, including a werewolf that coded in Pascal."

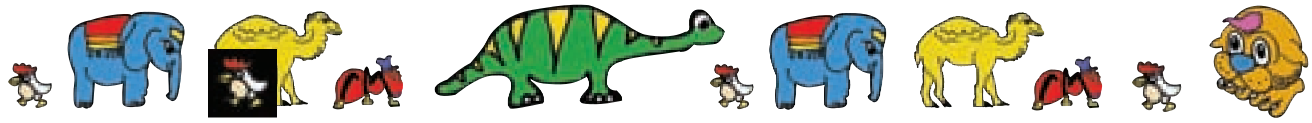
Retrospec's reputation for delivering superb remakes spread, and as more high-profile games got remade, Retrospec's star kept rising. "When Rich Jordan's *Klass Of '99* [a remake of *Skool Daze*] arrived, we ended up being linked to by a number of higher-profile websites, listed in magazines and even getting interviewed," Braine says. "This also brought in applications for membership in droves. We suddenly became a 'virtual label' – I saw sites comparing other remakes to ours, and phrases like 'as we've come to expect from Retrospec' began to appear in various reviews."

If there was anyone out there who still doubted Retrospec's



▼ *Head Over Heels* – a sterling remake of a classic game.





talent, they will have been won over by last year's remake of *Head Over Heels*. Coded by Tomaz Kac, with graphics by Graham Goring, *Head Over Heels* has found a legion of ecstatic fans, including its original creator, Jon Ritman. "It's a well-crafted remake and I'm extremely flattered that after all this time, people are willing to devote so much of their free time to one of my games," says Ritman. Indeed, his only concern was a slight change to some of the original room designs. "The programmer took an easy route for dealing with the walls and doors and, unfortunately, this has had a large effect in some rooms where the room design relied on the correct placing of the walls," Ritman says. Nevertheless, he's still pleased with the final result and is more than happy to see more of his titles remade – "especially if they're released commercially," he laughs. "Gimme those royalties."

That's Teamwork

Of course, when you're remaking retro classics, one of the first things you have to do is get permission to release them. While Braine admits that a few copyright holders have refused to deal with them, there aren't any problems with most titles. "I think most copyright holders are either flattered or mildly amused at our many remakes," says Braine. "We make no money from what we do – you'll notice there aren't even any adverts or pop-ups on our website. We're not in this for the money, we don't ask for donations and we're not on the take in any way, so we don't really tend to bother people too much."

While potential copyright difficulties are just one barrier that Retrospec has to negotiate, there are other logistical problems. When you have members living as far apart as England, Australia and Yugoslavia, it's a wonder that any titles get released in the first place. But as John Blythe, one of Retrospec's resident graphics artists, explains, it's not as complicated as you may think. "Normally, one of the guys announces a new game and I'll contact them and say 'Hey, I'd love to do the graphics for this' or they

THE LIKELY LADS

We tracked down Graham Goring and Tomaz Kac to talk about working under pressure, development times and 'bloody pigging Ghostbusters'

GTM: When did you join Retrospec?

GG: Ooh, right at the start back in 1998 or 1999 when we formed from a discussion in the Usenet newsgroup comp.sys.Sinclair – which is basically a load of Speccy fans grumbling about how games used to be better, how Top Deck is the best shandy and how it used to be all fields around here.

GTM: What do you do at Retrospec?

GG: I have a highly specialised role whereby I promise to do graphics for everyone, then spend the rest of my time regretting opening my big fat yap and then gradually drawing stuff.

GTM: What's your day job then?

GG: I'm a game designer at Warthog, and before that Zed Two.
TK: I code 'serious' programs for a local firm, anything from low-level drivers to management and security software.

GTM: What's been your favourite Retrospec game?

GG: Well, *Head Over Heels*, really. I learned a heck of a lot while doing the graphics for that (which can be seen in how the graphics vary in quality depending on which planet you're on), so I have very fond memories of it.

GTM: Was there any pressure recreating *Head Over Heels*, one of the greatest games ever?

TK: Because everyone has these really fond memories of *Head Over Heels* in the past, I really didn't want to let people down. That's why we took extra time to make it as close to the original as possible with added playability and graphics. Hopefully we succeeded.
GG: Oddly, no – because Tomaz kept pretty tight-lipped about the game until a fair way into its development and so I was a fair way into the graphics before anyone outside of Retrospec saw them. Plus it's a game I love, so I wasn't going to settle for anything I wasn't fairly proud of. I knew whatever the graphics looked like in the final game, they'd be the best I could manage.

GTM: Jon Ritman is very pleased with the remake of *Head Over Heels* – how do you feel about that?

GG: I think it's great! I know he thinks we altered a few things, which screwed with the difficulty curve a little (and he's quite right), but it's so nice when you can remake a game and it doesn't reduce the original author to a seething ball of apoplectic murderous rage.



GTM: How long does it usually take to finish a game?

GG: It depends if you're going to expand upon the amount of graphics in the original game or just redo what's there, as coming up with original graphics takes me a long time as I have no visual imagination and have to rely on reference.
TK: It depends on the complexity of the original game and on the detail you want to put into the remake. Some remakes can be done in a matter of weeks if the coding is not too complex and the game is not graphically intensive. *Head Over Heels* took a long time because we wanted it to be as perfect as possible.

GTM: What's been the most requested title?

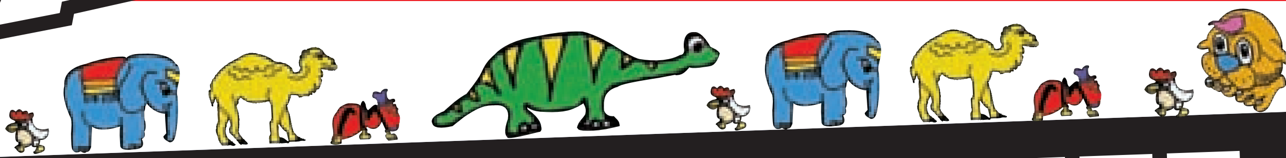
GG: Bloody pigging *Ghostbusters*. We make it quite clear that we don't do anything licensed and yet for some reason, fans of this game keep requesting it.
TK: I would say most people want remakes of Ultimate Play The Game games. We are doing some at the moment and more will probably follow.

GTM: What are you working on at the moment?

GG: Well, I'm currently working on a remake of *Ranarama* which I'll be coding and co-operating on the graphics with a chap called Zoggles, and in the meantime I'll gradually be doing the graphics for *I Ball 2* and *Sabre Wulf*. And probably some others I've no doubt forgotten about.
TK: I'm currently working on some (less complex) remakes, but with the recent lack of time because of work I am not sure when everything will be finished. I hope it will be worth the wait.

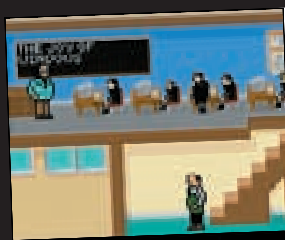
GTM: How does your partner feel about your hobby?

TK: My girlfriend loves it. She is my main tester and probably finds more bugs than anyone else. I can't imagine doing this in my free time if it wasn't for her.
GG: Not really applicable, although my imaginary one is very supportive and has really big tits.



SIX OF THE BEST

Here are just a few of the many great titles that Retrospec has remade for a new generation of gamers



SKOOL DAZE KLASS OF '99

Retrospec's first big game, *Klass Of '99* is a superb update of a classic Spectrum title. While it features a new school and a slightly different plot (not to mention several new characters), fans of the original *Skool Daze* will find themselves in very familiar territory.



HEAD OVER HEELS

Despite a few cosmetic changes that unfortunately affect certain puzzles, *Head Over Heels* is a cracking remake and further proof of Retrospec's desire to release high-quality software. Make sure you download it as soon as possible so you can rediscover this classic gem.



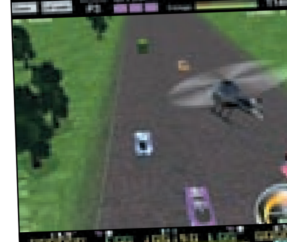
BLAZING TRAILS

Allan Bentham's *Blazing Trails* is a reworking of Gremlin Graphics' classic *Trail Blazer*. Slickly presented, enjoyable to play and with graphics by John Blythe, *Blazing Trails* is a perfect example of Retrospec's endeavour to recreate the gaming experiences of old.



DEFLECTOR

Another classic from Gremlin Graphics, *Deflector* sees you rotating various mirrors in order to guide your laser beam to its receiver. Created by Ignacio Perez Gil, its simple looking visuals hide a devilishly addictive game – you didn't have plans for a social life, did you?



HIGHWAY PURSUIT

More an amalgamation of classic games than an actual remake, *Highway Pursuit* is nevertheless a cracking title and pays homage to many old games. Featuring incredibly frantic gameplay and some delicious visuals, *Highway Pursuit* is well worth a download.



LUNAR JETMAN

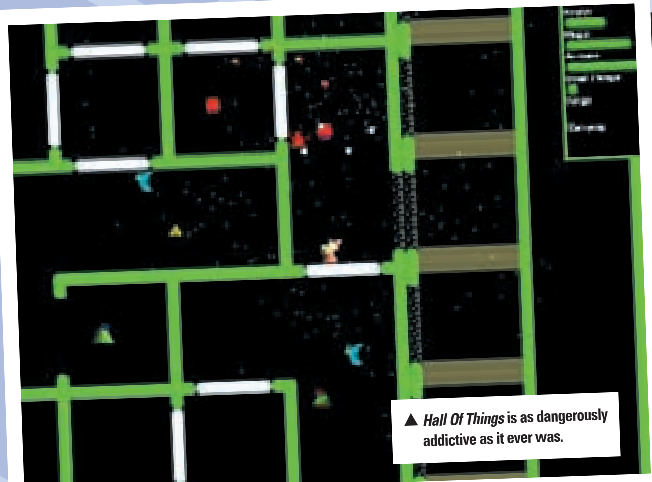
Many Ultimate titles are in development at Retrospec, and if Andy Noble's reinterpretation of *Lunar Jetman* is anything to go by, the results will be worth it. With superb cartoony visuals and the original's frenetic gameplay, *Lunar Jetman* perfectly captures another classic.

contact me saying 'If you're not too busy, do you fancy doing the graphics for my game?' – that's about as complex as it gets."

It may be relatively easy to get the idea for a remake up and running, but commitments to work, family and other pursuits mean that fans shouldn't expect a new game to be turned around in a few short months. "Take *Head Over Heels*, for example," says Blythe. "While some titles can be finished relatively quickly, others can have quite lengthy productions. *Head Over Heels* took poor Graham ages because of the sheer size and number of graphics involved. Plus you have to factor in that in most cases we're upping the resolution of the original's graphics, which always means extra work. Finally, there's the fact that most of us have normal jobs, which can eat into our personal time too. It can take as long as a normal development cycle of a commercial game sometimes to finish the graphics."

With so much to do and so little time in which to achieve it, it's little wonder that some fans get rather impatient when an announced remake starts to drag its heels or disappears entirely, but Retrospec is just one part of each individual's very busy life, as Jeff Braine explains. "We've had accusations that we announce a lot of games and then don't deliver them, but we all do this for free, and for fun," he says. "Sometimes life gets in the way, be it divorces, hard-drive crashes or simply copyright owners asking us to stop work. These things happen, and whilst it's extremely frustrating, it's normally completely out of our hands."

Braine should know – he's been tinkering away with a remake of *Sabre Wulf* for what seems like an eternity, but the Unix system engineer often finds himself with very little spare time to code this highly anticipated title. Of course, personal pride plays a large part as

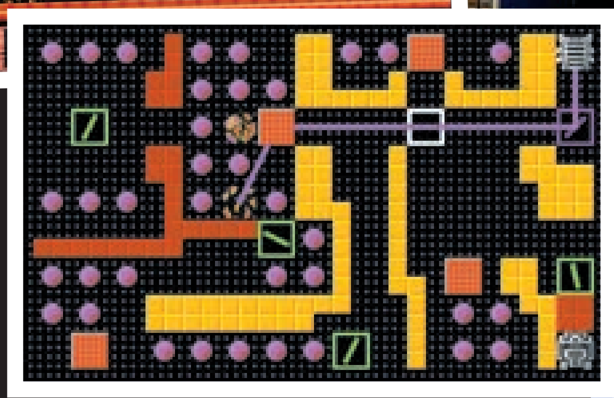


▲ *Hall Of Things* is as dangerously addictive as it ever was.



▲ It's been a long time coming, but *Sabre Wulf* is on its way. Honest.





▲ *Styx* is one of John Blythe's many Retrospec projects.



▲ Although it isn't finished yet, this remake of *Exolon* is looking mighty swish. Let's hope it's as good as Retrospec's *Cybernoid II*. Now *that's* a decent remake.

well and many Retrospec members want to make sure that a title is as good as it can be before it's released. "A large part of a successful remake is to make it 'feel' the same as the original," explains Braine. "For instance, in *Sabre Wulf* if you're running along and then take your finger off the direction key, Sabre Man doesn't just stop – he has momentum. It took me a while to get something that felt right in the PC version… and even now I feel it could do with a bit of tweaking."

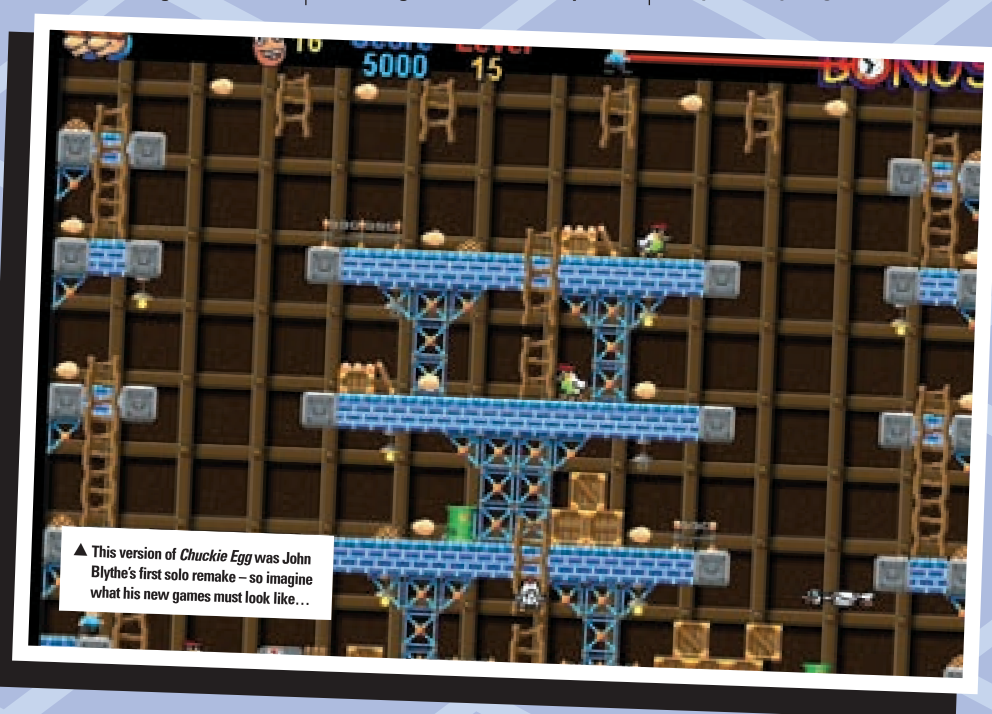
Best Job Ever

Despite various hiccups, Braine wouldn't change his hobby for the world and puts his passion for Retrospec down to the 8-bit trailblazers before him. "It probably differs from person to person, but for me, I wanted to pay tribute to the people whose work kept me entertained throughout my youth, as well as give something back to the now thriving retro community."

Although Retrospec's games are mostly created by the same group of talented individuals, Braine is happy for other fans to swell their ranks – just so long as you meet the group's requirements. "You'd need a fairly well-rounded knowledge of the language you chose to write in – one of the reasons *Sabre Wulf* is taking me a while to code is because I'm still learning some of the nuances of C," explains Braine. "After that, it's more a requirement that you have a decent understanding of the maths you're going to need to use, sometimes even physics if you're dealing with acceleration, momentum, gravity or whatever." If that hasn't melted your brain, you'll still need to get past Retrospec's stringent quality control – something for which it's been criticised in the past. "We've been accused of being 'elitist' because of our vetting, but that's a very big misconception," explains Braine. "Although we're proud of the exposure we've had, the good reviews and the requests for interviews, it's not gone to our heads, but like any good reputation gained, you have to try and maintain it. If we turn someone down, it's usually because their style doesn't fit ours, they have no real past work to demonstrate to us, or just because they'd rather make a game which is exactly like the original down to using the same graphics and sound effects, making no updates whatsoever."

Retrospec's insistence on maintaining high standards is just another reason why we're glad to see updates of some of our favourite games being moulded in their hands – particularly when we can enjoy the likes of *Head Over Heels* again. Roll on *Sabre Wulf*…

You can visit Retrospec and download these remakes at: http://retrospec.sgn.net



▲ This version of *Chuckie Egg* was John Blythe's first solo remake – so imagine what his new games must look like…

Classic Machine



SPECIFICATIONS

Though bulkier than its Sinclair rival, there was no doubt that the C64 packed the meaner punch.

Processor	6510
Speed	1MHz
RAM	64Kb
Size	404 x 216 x 75mm
Weight	1280g

WHY DID THE C64 HAVE TO PLAY SECOND FIDDLE TO THE SPECTRUM? IT WAS GREAT

Though many agree that the Spectrum was the 'Daddy' of home computers, there's an equally large group of old-school gamers who'd argue otherwise and not without good reason.

You see, while the Spectrum was massively popular in the UK, it was the Commodore 64 that went on to become the world's most popular 8-bit home computer. Launched in America in 1982, the C64 (as it became more widely known) was the successor to Commodore's first home computer outing, the Vic 20.

Initially, the C64 was seen as overpriced – particularly in the UK – where the hefty £400 price tag was deemed a tad expensive in a market where the inferior (in terms of processing power) Spectrum 48K was much more competitively priced. All that changed in 1984, though, when the C64's price was lowered to a more reasonable £200.

It was this decrease that sparked the war of the home computers that would rage until the end of the decade only to finally peter out the early Nineties.

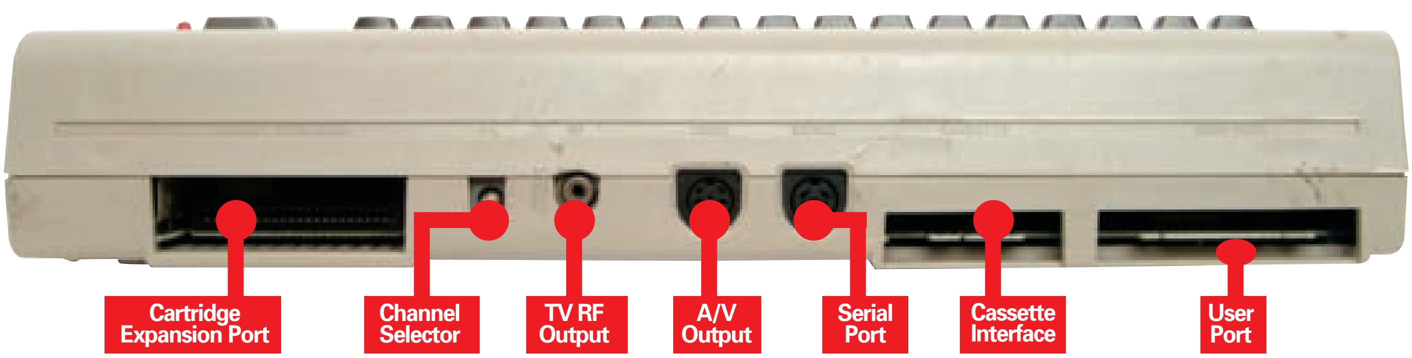


A WHITER SHADE OF, ER, OFF-WHITE

The first C64s were off-white in colour, bearing a strong similarity to the Vic 20. This soon changed (presumably to distance the computer from its older sibling), and the brown version seen above is best remembered. However, as the C64 became more successful, CBM (Commodore Business Machines) decided to capitalise on the success of the brand by releasing different versions of the machine.

The C128 was more powerful than its predecessor but didn't take off as developers preferred to design for the C64 and its large installed user base. The C128 had a C64 mode for running the older machine's software, but it still failed to match the sales of the earlier version. Attempts to release variants of the C64 were also mired by the fact they either weren't compatible with the C64 or were seen as lesser versions of the original.

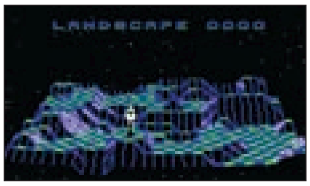
Poor product design also played a part. For example, the SX64 (left) – a portable C64 complete with 5-inch screen and disk drive – didn't have a rechargeable battery and the screen was too small to use.



KEY GAMES

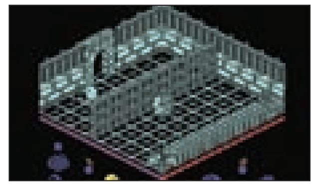
There were many crossovers between the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC range and the Commodore, but these are our favourite games for the C64

THE SENTINEL



Widely regarded as an all-time classic, Geoff Crammond's perfectly executed and unique game enthralled C64 users back in 1986. This strategy game featured 10,000 levels pitting you, the Synthoid, against the threat of the eponymous Sentinel. Taking the Synthoid, you had to make your way toward the Sentinel while remaining undetected in an electronic game of cat and mouse. Detection meant that the Synthoid's energy would be drained, so making your way to a position where you could see the square that was home to your foe (and thus drain the Sentinel's own power) was devilishly difficult. Fancy repeating the process a thousand times? No? Thanks to some blindingly addictive gameplay and stunning graphics (for their time), plenty of people tried…

HEAD OVER HEELS



For those of a certain age, the isometric puzzle games of Bernie Drummond and Jon Ritman were, and remain, really rather special. *Bat Man* had demonstrated what the two were capable of but it was *Head Over Heels* that took the genre to new heights. Released in 1987, the game placed you in control of two characters, Head and Heels. Each had special abilities that you had to use independently to access rooms containing the requisite tough-as-a-toughened-nut puzzles. However, at some points you could actually combine the two (hence the title of the game) which merged their abilities to enable you to tackle yet more of the 301 locations on offer. Beautiful to look at and harder than steel, it remains a true classic that we'd love to see return.

WIZBALL



It's a game about a wizard who's trapped in a ball – geddit? Another Ocean classic and certainly one of our favourite games of 1987, here you had to do battle with Zark, who had drained your world of colour. Your mission (with the aid of your cat) was to restore colour to each of the increasingly challenging levels. It was essentially a shoot-'em-up, the twist being that you had to learn how to control a ball-shaped wizard. Mastering this bouncy magician took some doing, but as the level of difficulty increased you were also awarded much-needed power-ups. A triumph for original gaming, *Wizball* combined gorgeous graphics by Mark Jones with some impressive music and sound effects.

PERIPHERALS AND ADD-ONS

As is the case with most hardware, the Commodore 64 was home to a surprising number of peripherals and add-ons to help keep pace with changing times and needs of its users. As the machine was supposed to be a home computer, many of these were tailored to serve more serious purposes.

The C64 could happily support a printer, a housebrick-sized 170K floppy disk drive and a Datasette. However, a modem was also released as well as a mouse, which made playing *Arkanoid* even more of a joy. Most importantly, the C64 had two joystick ports, which is all that really mattered.





"WHY I LOVE MY COMMODORE 64"

My first real glimpse of the eye-stinging ultra-colourful world of the sublime Commodore 64 was playing *Rocket Ball* and then *Knight Games* at Mark Tyrie's house. I simply couldn't believe the difference in quality between this sumptuous block of fudge and my faithful old ZX Spectrum, which by now had gone through its second keyboard membrane and fifteenth Quickshot microswitch joystick.

I was determined to join the C64 club and fortune smiled on me – during work experience in the Computer Cabin (now a flower shop), I discovered a forgotten pre-order still in the box. Up the jumper, down the fire escape and away, as they say.

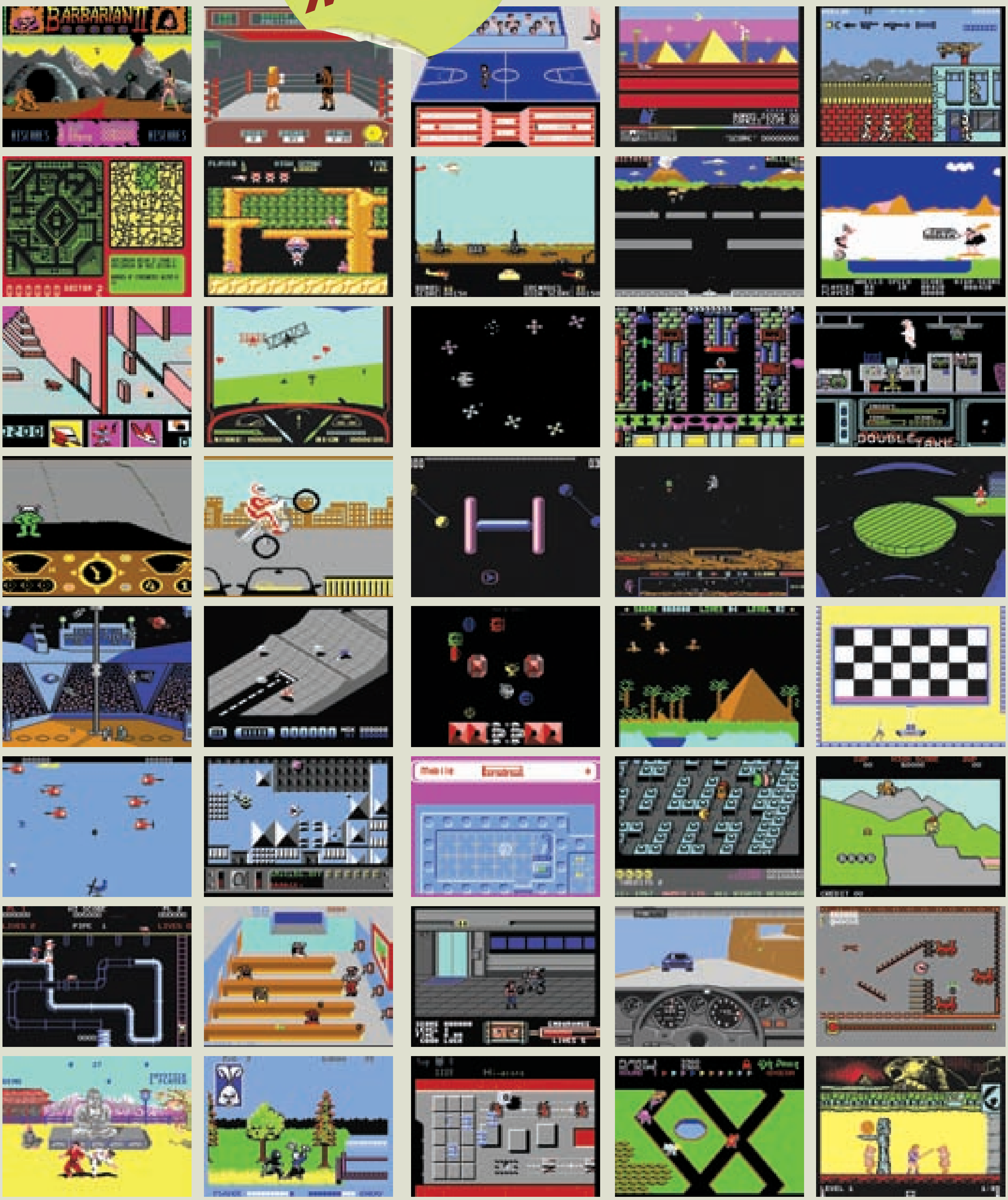
Before the fuse blew and I upgraded to an Atari ST and then Mega Drive, my hearing-aid-beige wonder allowed me to sample the delights of *Psi-5 Trading Company*, *Uridium*, *Paradroid*, *Wizball*, *Zak McKracken*, *Buggy Boy*, *Gunship*, *Armalyte*, *Law Of The West* and my favourite, *Bubble Bobble*. Of course, I can pick most of these up again today for mere pence from a car boot sale, so they're never too far away.

Damian Butt

commodore



Classic Machine

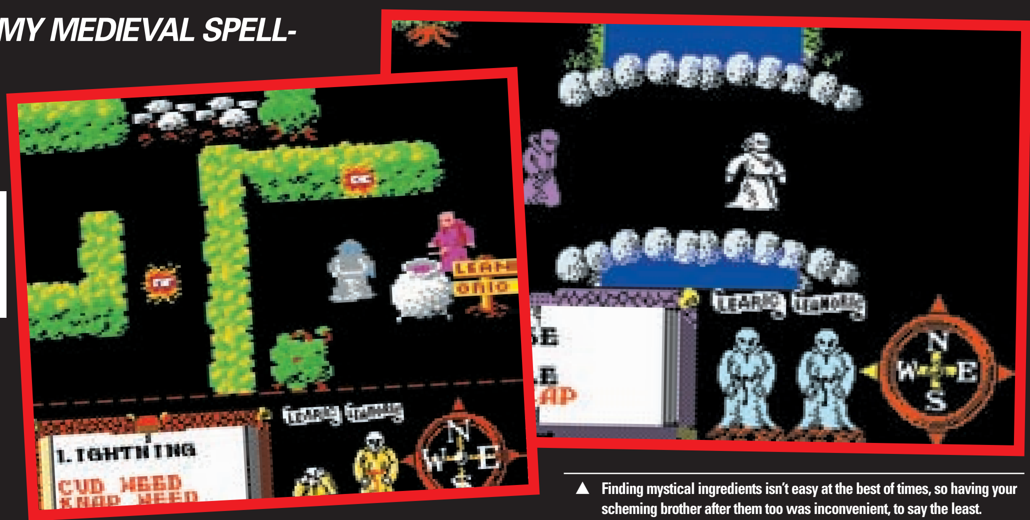


Why Don't They Remake...

HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY MEDIEVAL SPELL-CASTING BROTHER

FEUD

Release: 1987
Format: Various Home Systems
Publisher: Bulldog
Developer: The Pickford Brothers



▲ Finding mystical ingredients isn't easy at the best of times, so having your scheming brother after them too was inconvenient, to say the least.

Sibling rivalry can be a terrible thing, but imagine the chaos that would ensue if the combatants were skilled wizards. Taking place in the sleepy village of Little Dullard, Ste and John Pickford's computer-based tale of brotherly hate saw Learic and Leanoric in a duel that could end with only one survivor.

Taking control of Learic, the main aim of *Feud* was to make your way through the expansive village and collect the ingredients needed to complete a range of potent spells. Each spell required two separate ingredients and with 12 different incantations to complete, you really had your work cut out.

Each of the spells was inscribed within your leather tome and a simple press of the space bar (together with left or right) enabled you to flick through the various pages and find out which spells needed completing. Once you'd managed to collect the right herbs, you needed to return to your trusty cauldron where you could concoct the potion, get ready to hunt down your wayward brother and then use some nasty spells on him.

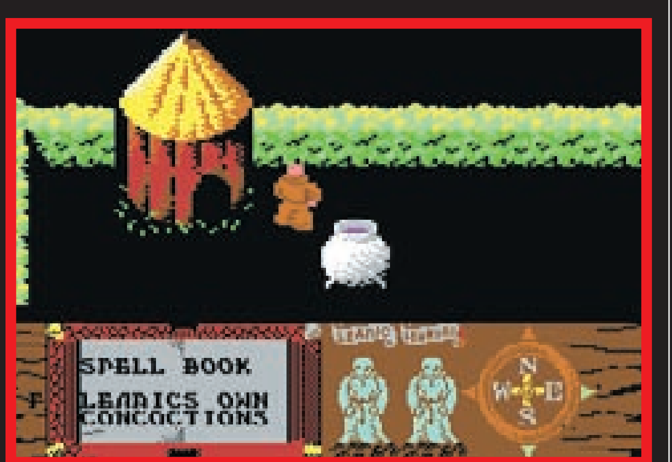
Teleport, Sprites, Freeze, Invisible and Lightning were just a few of the charms on offer and the Pickfords ensured that there was a nice balance between offensive and defensive spells. Of course, the real genius of *Feud* was that while you were busy hunting for the necessary ingredients with which to slay your brother, your elder sibling was doing exactly the same. The result was a frantic battle that saw you racing through the detailed flick-screen environments in order to collect all the herbs before your brother.

A handy compass showed Leanoric's position at all times and things would get incredibly tense whenever he appeared on screen and started bombarding you with a barrage of deadly spells. Thankfully, Leanoric's spell book was exactly the same as your own, so at least you always had an idea of what to expect from your brother.

With bold, brightly coloured visuals (especially on the Amstrad version) *Feud* was a highly enjoyable title and was a fantastic debut for Mastertronic's new budget label, Bulldog. It received numerous awards (including the coveted Crash Smash on the Speccy) and enjoyed similar success on the Amstrad and C64 (though those versions weren't programmed by the Pickfords).

We're certain that with a bit of tweaking, a variation on the game would still work today. While it's far from original, we quite like the idea of racing around in the first-person perspective, spell book open in one hand and flinging around potions with the other. Of course, the game would feature a much larger range of incantations to collect and today's consoles would be able to generate some very impressive visuals (think *Hexen*, but with the *Doom 3* engine).

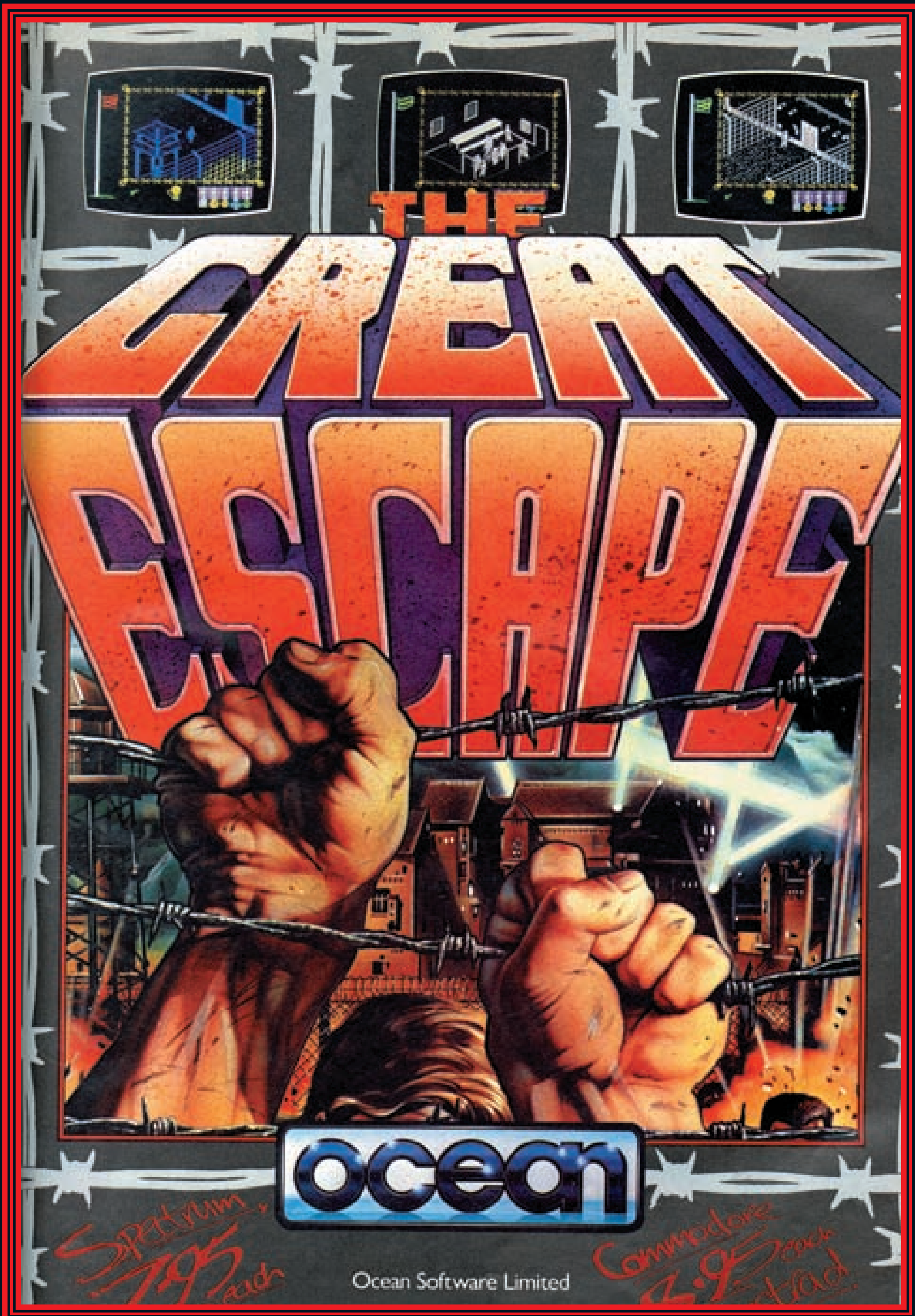
Failing that, you could move away from the brother-versus-brother idea and turn the game into a RTS where you're an overlord or god who must send out his followers to collect the relevant resources in order to defeat your opponent. Now, where's that Knap Weed?



▲ Chuck your collected ingredients into your cauldron to create some nifty potions. Gas mark 6 should do it.

STRANGE BEGINNINGS

Seeing that *Feud*'s battling brothers were created by two real-life siblings, you might think they'd have used their own scraps for the game's plot. As John Pickford explains, though, the idea stems from *Elite*. "There's this feeling you get at the end of a heated battle when there's only one enemy left and you're nearly dead," he says. "You're determined to take him out even though you're likely to die yourself. I wanted to recreate that emotion in a game." After replaying *Feud*, we'd say that he succeeded.



THE GREAT ESCAPE (Various Home Systems) Ocean, 1986 – UK Advertisement

Retro

ONE-ON-ONE BEAT-'EM-UPS FAMILY TREE

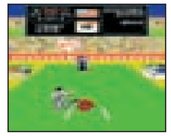
From oldies like *Karate Champ* through to *Street Fighter II* and *Tekken 4*, the one-on-one fighting game has always been a firm favourite with gamers. It's had its up and downs, but even today the genre remains popular, if somewhat stagnant. Here, we present a concise guide to the games that punched and kicked their way into videogame history.

KUNG-FU



1984
ZX Spectrum
Bug-Byte's effort offered players a chance to enjoy some fight action in the comfort of their own homes. The game was generally quite limited, although it did include an action replay option to keep you brawling.

KARATE CHAMP



1984
Arcade, Various Home Systems
The best-of-three rounds system, bonus stages and a wide range of attacks were just a handful of the innovations introduced by Data East's coin-op. The game's two-joystick control system didn't catch on, however.

WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST



1985
Various Home Systems
Essentially a home computer clone of *Karate Champ*, this title helped establish the popularity of the genre. Unfortunately, even the definitive C64 version suffered the 'sweep defeats all' flaw that would plague other games.

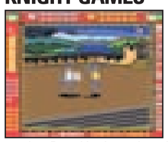
YIE AR KUNG-FU



1985
Arcade, Various Home Systems
The appearance of energy bars and varied fighters (including female foes) were firsts for the genre. Weapons and projectile attacks also featured – the latter preceded *Street Fighter*'s Hadokens and suchlike.

WEAPON BASED

KNIGHT GAMES



1986
Various Home Systems
This title was a sort of medieval *Hyper Sports* but, for the most part, *Knight Games* focused on weapon-based combat. Repetitive it may have been, but to be fair it was quite polished for the time (as was the armour).

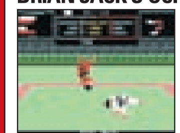
INTERNATIONAL KARATE



1985/86
Various Home Systems
Archer McLean's game improved upon *…Fist* with better graphics, tighter controls and a range of international locations. As with *…Fist*, the C64 version – with its superior sound and visuals – was the one to own.

REALISM

BRIAN JACK'S UCHI-MATA



1986
Various Home Systems
Martech's game was a more technical effort, which unusually centred on the martial art of judo rather than karate or kung fu. Not bad, but the whole Judo simulation thing never really caught on.

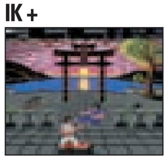
COMEDY

BARBARIAN



1987
Various Home Systems
Taking its cue from the *Conan* movies, this enjoyable sword-based beat-'em-up gained notoriety for its tacky ad campaign. It did, however precede *Mortal Kombat* by including some of the earliest fatality moves.

IK +



1987/88
Various Home Systems
This outing had three on-screen fighters (okay, so it's not quite one-on-one any more) battling it out against a great Rob Hubbard soundtrack and some top sound effects. Dropping the trousers of a foe still raises a smile.

STREET FIGHTER



1987
Arcade, Various Home Conversions
Before the six-button system, Capcom's cabinets used pressure-sensitive pads. The gameplay itself was fairly ropey, but as a dress rehearsal for *SFII* the importance of this game can't be overstated.

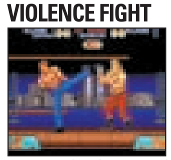
SNK

SPITTING IMAGE



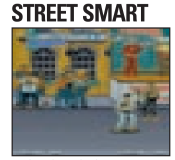
1988
Various Home Systems
Tedious slap-'em-up based on the satirical puppet show. Fighting with characters such as Thatcher, Reagan and the Pope may sound amusing, but it wasn't. Early proof that fighting games and humour don't mix.

VIOLENCE FIGHT



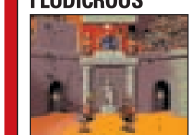
1989
Arcade
Massively lacklustre in terms of gameplay, this Taito title (along with other tepid releases of the time) led many to the conclusion that the one-on-one beat-'em-up was dead in the water. As we know, this was not the case.

STREET SMART



1989
Arcade, Mega Drive
An early and wholly unremarkable foray into the genre for SNK – a firm which would later go on to become a major player in the one-on-one field. Even the idea of fighting in the street had been done before.

I LUDICROUS



1989
Amiga, Atari ST
Another badly judged stab at the comedy fighting market. This time round you were controlling a hapless gladiator as he battled a number of ill-conceived opponents. About as funny as standing on a rusty nail.

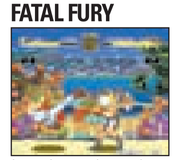
SEGA

STREET FIGHTER II



1991
Arcade, Various Home Systems
After the mediocre *Street Fighter* Capcom returned with one of the most astounding titles in gaming history. The game managed to revive the flagging coin-op market and the one-on-one beat-'em-up.

FATAL FURY



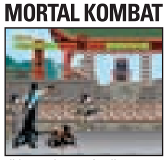
1991
Neo Geo
With only three fighters to choose from, this didn't trouble *Street Fighter II* too much. The game's most memorable innovation was the way that certain stages allowed fighters to switch between two planes.

BUDOKAN



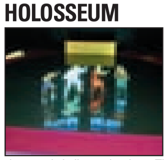
1991
Various Home Systems
A much deeper game than your average arcade-style button-basher which, unusually for a beat-'em-up, required a modicum of thought and restraint. Multiple disciplines, including Kendo, added greater depth to the game.

MORTAL KOMBAT



1992
Arcade, Various Home Systems
A crass American bandwagon-jumper that lacked any of the subtleties of Capcom's sublime *Street Fighter II*. But it did contain gory fatality moves, which helped it gain notoriety and, in turn, commercial success.

HOLOSSEUM



1992
Arcade
Sega had learned little from the failure of its bizarre hologram-style *Time Traveler* coin-op and followed it up with this dire beat-'em-up that used similar technology. The game made little impact in arcades.

SAMURAI SHODOWN



1993
Neo Geo, 3DO
By now, SNK was a major player in the genre. The firm's *Samurai Shodown* eschewed the hand-to-hand combat of rival titles and instead allowed players to indulge in some beautifully balanced weapon-based combat.

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS



1993
Mega Drive
For a time, Segas's 16-bit console lacked its own variant of *Street Fighter II* so a number of clones popped onto the Mega Drive, this being one of the more famous efforts. Sadly, and inevitably, it lacked any of the flair of Capcom's game.

VIRTUA FIGHTER



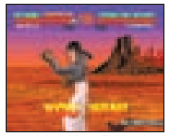
1993
Arcade, Saturn
Whilst Sega's game was essentially still working on a 2D axis, the 3D visuals set a depressing trend that inevitably led to the sidelining of traditional 2D fighting games. Admittedly, it did herald a new wave of one-on-one fighters.

RISE OF THE ROBOTS



1994
Various
This shamefully bad release was backed up by an enormous amount of hype, with the game's developers promising players the world. Instead they delivered one of the most flawed and tedious examples of the genre ever seen.

TEKKEN



1994
Arcade, PSone
Namco answer to Sega's *Virtua Fighter* series, which featured more characters, better controls and superior visuals (compared to the original *Virtua Fighter*, that is). A swift and extremely accomplished PSone conversion followed.

DARK STALKERS



1994
Arcade, Saturn, PSone
Having churned out a number of *SFII* variants, Capcom replaced martial artists with a number of outlandish creatures including a vampire, werewolf and a Frankenstein's monster look-alike. Gained cult status.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS '94



1994
Neo Geo
Pooling together characters from several of its own games, SNK created the first instalment of what would become one of the most popular 2D fighters of all time. New additions to the series are still released today.

CLAYFIGHTERS



1994
Super Nintendo
Clayfighters proved again that the old comedy beat-'em-up genre didn't work. When it was moving the game looked passable, but the charmless characters and stodgy controls made this a chore. Amazingly, an N64 sequel followed.

SOUL EDGE/BLADE



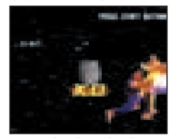
1995
Arcade, PSone
A spiritual successor to weapon-based titles such as *Barbarian*. It did moderately well and the PSone conversion gained cult status. Then, of course, there was the sequel, *Soul Calibur*, which helped shift a few Dreamcasts.

SF ZERO



1995
Arcade, Saturn, PSone
A change in direction for the series. The game adopted a slightly cartoon-style look, while features such as mid-air blocks and reversals seem to have been ripped from some of Capcom's own *SFII* clones.

STREET FIGHTER EX



1996
Arcade, PSone
Capcom and Arika dragged the *Street Fighter* franchise into the third dimension with a mixed degree of success. The gameplay remained more or less intact but the angular polygon fighters lacked the charm of their sprite-based counterparts.

STAR GLADIATOR



1996
Arcade, PSone
One of Capcom's earlier ventures into the 3D fight arena. At the time, the game had a certain visual appeal but it lacked the subtle gameplay that had made the firm's earlier 2D efforts so popular. Not particularly memorable.

BLOODY ROAR



1997
Arcade, PSone
Perhaps influenced by the 'transform into an animal' element from SEGA's *Altered Beast*. Aside from this it was pretty much business as usual, and the game spawned some equally unremarkable sequels.

BUSHIDO BLADE



1997
PSone
Going against the grain, this ambitious title dispensed with energy bars as one strike of a sword could kill an opponent. Sadly, the expansive arenas meant that battles often involved running around with neither combatant fighting.

EHRGEIZ



1998
Arcade, PSone
Having enjoyed cult success with the *Tobal* games, Square and Dream Factory developed this ambitious 3D fighter featuring a number of characters from *Final Fantasy VII*. Interesting idea, but unfortunately flawed.

POWER STONE



1999
Arcade, Dreamcast
Similar to *Ehrgeiz*, but more technically accomplished. Solid controls, interactive 3D arenas and strong character designs made this a favourite. The sequel took things further still with a four-player mode.

CAPCOM VS SNK



2000
Arcade, PSone, Dreamcast
The two behemoths of the 2D fighting genre collaborated to create a truly remarkable beat-'em-up. Taking characters from both the Capcom and SNK stables, this was a fight fan's dream come true. The sequel was even better.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4



2001
Arcade, PS2
After Sega's exit from the hardware market, the series finally turned up on a Sony console. Again, some criticised the game's lack of innovation, but there's no denying its quality. A newer version, *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution*, is superior.

TEKKEN 4



2001/2
Arcade/PS2 later
The latest (and greatest) instalment in Namco's long-running series. What it lacks in imagination it makes up for with some exceptionally polished gameplay. Destructible scenery and closed arenas also spice things up.

SOUL CALIBUR II



2002
Arcade/Consoles
Despite being incredibly similar to *Soul Calibur*, there's no doubt that Namco pulled the right punches (and sword slashes) for this sequel. The console versions even had format-specific fighters, though only the Cube's Link suited the game.

CAPCOM FIGHTING JAM



2004
Xbx/PS2
Now this looks special. *Capcom Fighting Jam* features characters from various Capcom franchises and promises to be another great 2D fighter. Purists are miffed about Ken's absence, but he may be a secret character.

S•Y•S•T•E•M•3

DEADLY NINJAS, CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED BEAT-'EM-UPS AND EVEN SICKLY SWEET PLATFORMERS – SYSTEM 3 HAD IT ALL. GAMES™ GOT IN TOUCH TO FIND OUT JUST HOW EASY IT WAS BEING ONE OF THE MOST REVERED 8-BIT DEVELOPERS OF ALL TIME

It's not often that a software developer can consistently deliver highly original and innovative games to both public and critical acclaim. When you're System 3, however, such accolades seemingly go hand-in-hand. Formed in 1984, System 3 burst onto the scene with the *Star Wars*-inspired *Death Star Interceptor*.

International Karate (known as *World Championship Karate* in the US) quickly followed and became the first European-developed game to achieve the number one spot on America's Billboard chart.

People soon realised that System 3 was a company to keep an eye on, and in 1987 gamers were rewarded with the groundbreaking *The Last Ninja*. Sequels to both *The Last Ninja* and *International Karate* quickly followed and before long the name System 3 became synonymous with Commodore 64.

Never afraid to try something new, later releases saw the creation of Grecian platformers (*Myth*), vertical shoot-'em-ups (*Dominator*) and *Chase HQ*-styled racers (*Turbo Charge*) – all original in their own ways and all adored by critics and gamers. Things went slightly awry with the arrival of the 16-bit computers as anticipated games like the *Last Ninja* franchise were incredibly sloppy ports, taking little advantage of the superior technology that the new machines possessed.

System 3 is still creating games today (under the new moniker Studio 3) and is finally ready to release a follow up to the critically acclaimed *The Last Ninja 3*. We managed to track down Mark Cale, who worked on the original *Last Ninja* titles before founding Studio 3, to get his opinion on the 8-bit era, being an industry trendsetter and, of course, ninjas…



▲ Stealth, swords, cunning and a clean pair of black pyjamas – all that a fearsome ninja needs to survive in the world of *The Last Ninja*. Careful now…

Q: WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE THE ORIGINAL NAME, SYSTEM 3, AND WHY THE LATER CHANGE TO STUDIO 3?

A: There were three of us and 'system' was a trendy word during the formative years of our industry. Why change? Well, it was felt that as the company matured and its operations embraced all the activities in our industry – eveloping publishing and marketing – and we were doing more and more third-party development, that Studio 3 better encapsulated what we are doing.

Q: YOU'RE WIDELY REGARDED AS SOME OF THE BEST CODERS FOR THE COMMODORE 64. WHAT WAS YOUR MAIN ATTRACTION TO THE MACHINE OVER ITS PEERS?

A: One of the problems with many of the other machines was their design to a fixed cost. The biggest culprit of this was the Spectrum – it was long suspected that Sir Clive Sinclair designed a great machine and simply kept removing features and components till it could be made at a particular price. Commodore and Atari, on the other hand, crafted machines that were a delight to play and fun to programme. When you look back at the early days and remember things like the Oric, Tangerine, Acorn rack system (the origin of the BBC machine), the BBC machine, Dragon, Elan and many others, they really didn't hold a candle to the Commodore 64 or Atari 400/800 for gaming. If only Commodore had stopped trying to make it into a business machine – or worse, a 'personal productivity tool' – then it would have and possibly still might control the games industry.

Q: CONSISTENTLY PRODUCING SUCH ACCLAIMED AND INNOVATIVE HITS AS THE LAST NINJA, IK+ AND MYTH MUST HAVE BEEN VERY TAXING. WHAT WAS SYSTEM 3'S WORK ETHOS?

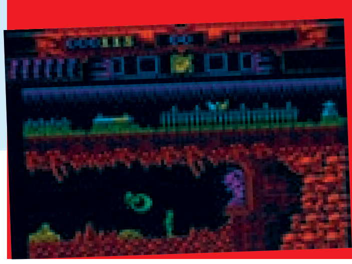
A: It's easy to say that in those days

MYTH: HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Set in ancient Greece, *Myth* was one of the only System 3 games to really divide critics' opinions, despite receiving over 22 awards worldwide. Taking the role of a purple-haired warrior you had to fight your way through increasingly tough levels and face some of the hardest guardians in gaming history.



Despite a few niggling gameplay elements (to defeat some bosses you had to have some knowledge of Greek mythology) the game was yet another superbly executed product. On the NES the game was licensed to Mindscape in America, where it was relaunched under the *Conan* licence.



◀ Don't know your Agamemnon from your Achilles heel? You might have come unstuck in *Myth* then…

RETRO MICRO GAMES ACTION

Company lookback

the greatest games were created by the most maverick developers (a description we've never been shy of) and all that was required to create a game was lots of beer, pub games, pizza and Pro-Plus for the morning after. I'm not saying we didn't have that going on – our parties and press trips were the stuff that industry legends were forged from. System had, and retains to this day, something else. It's very difficult to pin down our 'factor X' but it includes elements of being able to put the right teams together, finding the best people for the job and remembering that developing the games has to be fun, otherwise what's the point?

Q: DEATH STAR INTERCEPTOR WAS YOUR FIRST GAME. WERE THERE ANY PRESSURES WORKING ON SUCH A WELL LOVED LICENCE?

A: No, it was a lot easier then.

Q: WHAT PROJECTS DID YOU WORK ON BEFORE SYSTEM 3 WAS FOUNDED?

A: None. I set up System 3 at the age of 17, 23 years ago.

Q: BESIDES SYSTEM 3'S GAMES, WHAT OTHER PROJECTS DO YOU WISH YOU HAD WORKED ON?



▲ *The Last Ninja 3* was the final instalment in the soon-to-be-inaccurately-named trilogy.

A: Easy really, *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids*, *Defender*, the *Super Mario* series of games, the *Street Fighter* series, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Daytona* (still the best racing coin-op).

Q: HOW DID YOU FIND WORKING WITH ARCHER MCLEAN ON THE INTERNATIONAL KARATE SERIES? ARE YOU STILL IN TOUCH WITH HIM?

A: Archer is a great coder and good fun to work with. He worked on converting the original *IK* from the Spectrum and Amstrad onto the C64 and Atari 8-bit machines. He also converted the game to the Amiga from our Atari ST version which we had developed in Hungary. I see very little of Archer now as he is focused more on snooker games as opposed to arcade action games. He should have stuck to the mass market as opposed to niche product.

Q: WERE GAMES BETTER IN THE OLD DAYS?

A: Yep, no doubt about it. When did you last read a review that spent more time detailing the gameplay than the graphics or sound? There are still very few great titles. Getting the balance between gameplay and visuals is very difficult – making people understand that long-term challenge in a game is worth a lot more than a moment of glitzy effects. If you look at the structure of big teams now with virtual regiments of artists, stylists, level designers, environment artists, visual content directors (and their assistants) and so on, somewhere down the list come the programmers.

Q: THE LAST NINJA FRANCHISE IS BY FAR YOUR MOST POPULAR WORK. WHAT ORIGINALLY INSPIRED YOU TO MAKE THE FIRST GAME?

A: I had, and still have, a great fondness for all things Japanese and exciting Hong Kong martial arts movies. I love Japanese history as it

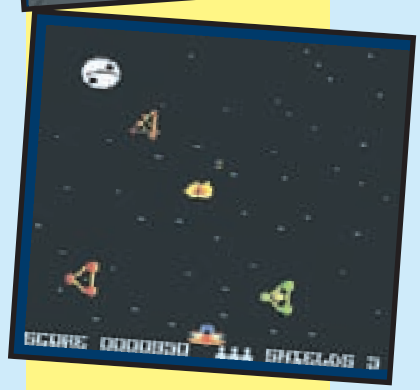
DEATH STAR INTERCEPTOR

Regardless of whether you felt it was inspired by, or simply ripped off, the *Star Wars* trilogy, there was no denying that System 3's first game was a great little shoot-'em-up. Get past the initially frustrating first level (aim your X-Wing through a series of consecutive rings) and you quickly got onto the good stuff.

The second stage saw you blasting away at the Imperial forces; TIE Fighters attacked in droves and would scale in size as they headed towards you. Such was the frantic on-screen action, you very nearly missed the approaching Death Star that slowly appeared in the left-hand corner of the screen.

The final assault recreated the famous trench run – there were more than enough enemies to shoot down and the final stretch would see you having to avoid multiple laser beams. Make your way through all that and it was time to drop a Photon Torpedo down the exhaust and start the whole thing all over again. Great stuff.



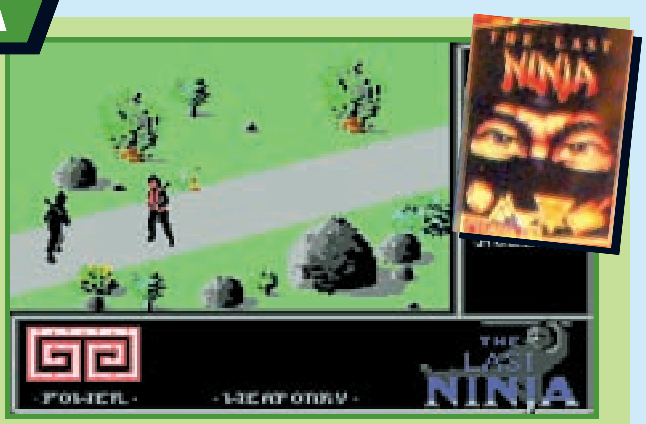


▲ *Star Wars* rip-off? Does it matter? *Death Star Interceptor* was a cracking shoot-'em-up with some neat graphical touches.

THE LAST NINJA

This is where it all started – if ever there was a franchise that got C64 owners quivering with delight it was the *Last Ninja* trilogy. Appearing in 1987, *The Last Ninja* saw you take on the role of Armakuni, the last surviving member of the Brotherhood of the Ninjas. Vowing revenge on the evil warlord Kunitoki, you battled your way through (and under) Lin Fen Island.

More combat-based than the later puzzle-heavy sequels, *The Last Ninja* was the ultimate proof that no-one knew the Commodore 64 hardware like System 3. Animation and visuals were second to none and a moving score completed an extremely impressive package. System 3's 3D isometric adventure became the best selling C64 title of all time and shifted over 2 million units worldwide. Armakuni's adventure had begun and the sequels just got better and better every time.





SYSTEM 3

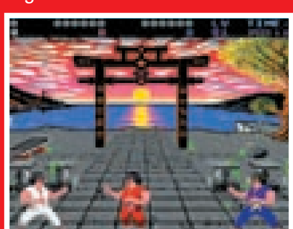
INTERNATIONAL KARATE +



Faced with the daunting prospect of making a sequel that superseded the original game (over 1.5 million units sold in the US alone), Archer McLean proved more than ready for the seemingly impossible task. A third fighter, copious amounts of trouser dropping and a great bonus game all came together to create a fantastic follow-up that is still appearing on consoles like the GBA a full 16 years after its original release.

Combat throughout was extremely fluid with a grand total of 14 different moves being available (not bad for a joystick with only one fire button). McLean's attention to detail wasn't just used on the fighters – the background was full of detail; fish leaped from the water, birds flew overhead and caterpillars inched their way across the screen.

Affectionately known as *IK+*, the crowning jewel in the game was a scintillating score by Commodore 64 maestro, Rob Hubbard. As with many of System 3's titles, the game was critically lauded and remains a classic to this day.



▲ Somehow, *IK+* improved on the original game.







▲ *Flimbo's Quest* was an accomplished, but rather difficult, platformer from System 3.

has so many parallels with our own, in particular, how far back it goes. Regarding the fascination with ninjas, well, they're like all the good bits from a broad range of *Boy's Own*-style stories or movies all rolled into one. There's action, stealth, intrigue and so on. They're just great characters from history.

Q: WHY DID YOU FEEL THE NEED TO MAKE* LAST NINJA REMIX *AND NOT ADD ANY ADDITIONAL CONTENT FOR AMIGA OWNERS?

A: To extend the shelf life we needed to reintroduce the title at the retailers' request in a new package. Hence the name *Ninja Remix*.

Q: SETTING* THE LAST NINJA 2 *IN NEW YORK WAS A FAR CRY FROM THE IDYLLIC LIN FEN ISLAND OF THE ORIGINAL. WAS IT A CONSCIOUS MOVE TO APPEAL MORE TO THE AMERICAN MARKET?

A: Not really. I decided that it would be fun to put a traditional warrior in a modern urban environment and not give him a gun. Plus it's damned hard to get a helicopter into 16th Century Japan.

Q:* THE LAST NINJA 3 *TOOK THE SERIES AS FAR AS EXISTING TECHNOLOGY COULD. IS THIS THE MAIN REASON WHY A SEQUEL HAS TAKEN SO LONG TO EMERGE?

A: One of the great defining qualities of Studio 3 is the close collaboration of the development talent and how everyone is given a hearing as to new ideas and directions for development to follow. At the time there were only a couple of the senior people, myself included, that wanted to continue with the ninja theme whereas the vast majority of people wanted to look at new areas that might be more in keeping with the market.

However, now that we have reached a time in the company's life where we can afford to indulge ourselves and do projects that we really want to do, I've managed to put back in place the original key members of the team that made the old *Ninja* games so exciting, hopefully to repeat the success.

Q: ALL THE* LAST NINJA *GAMES HAD WONDERFULLY ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC AND POSSESSED MANY CINEMATIC QUALITIES. WERE THERE ANY FILMS IN PARTICULAR THAT INSPIRED THE CREATION OF THE MUSIC?

A: I personally didn't have much to do with the direction of the music except to let people know when it was exactly right for the game. So I can't really tell you what the original inspirations were.

Q: WILL THE NEW VERSION OF* THE LAST NINJA *FEEL FAMILIAR TO ANYONE WHO HAS PLAYED THE ORIGINAL GAMES, OR IS IT A COMPLETELY STANDALONE TITLE?

A: Yes, it is a standalone project but it has all the qualities that were present in the originals – the almost slavish mentality of getting things right, even the smallest details.

If I told you the number of revisions I've had done just to the running animations you'd think that I'd probably be able to do another complete game within the same workflow – and you'd probably be



right. But that's the way it always has been with *Last Ninja*, and more than likely always will be.

Q: MANY GAMES BASED ON PREVIOUS TITLES SOMETIMES CONTAIN VERSIONS OF THE ORIGINAL GAME. ANY CHANCE OF FINDING A C64 VERSION OF* THE LAST NINJA *TUCKED AWAY IN THE NEW GAME?

A: Nice idea, you never know…

Q: MANY OF YOUR GAMES WERE PRIMARILY FOR THE HOME COMPUTERS, SO HOW DID YOU FIND THE EVENTUAL TRANSITION TO THE CONSOLE MARKET?

A: Tough. I think you'd find that a lot of people that made the transition, if they answered honestly, would say it can be very hard going. It's not really one thing in particular but coming from a free-for-all environment like a computer to the more structured, disciplined environment and ethos of getting a console game on the shelf then things can get difficult and frustrating. But you manage it in the end because that's where our game players are so we have to be loyal to the fans.

Q:* VENDETTA *SEEMED TO INSPIRE THE* GRAND THEFT AUTO *SERIES. ANY CHANCE OF A SEQUEL?

A: There's always a chance of a sequel from Studio 3. You know what they say about old great games – they're never get totally forgotten, they just get converted.

Q: WHAT WERE THE REASONS BEHIND DROPPING THE PROPOSED VERSION OF* THE LAST NINJA *ON THE SPECTRUM?

A: Who said that? It's a lie, I tell you. Bloody PR people, telling the truth when you least want them to…

Q: WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE GAME THAT THE COMPANY MADE?

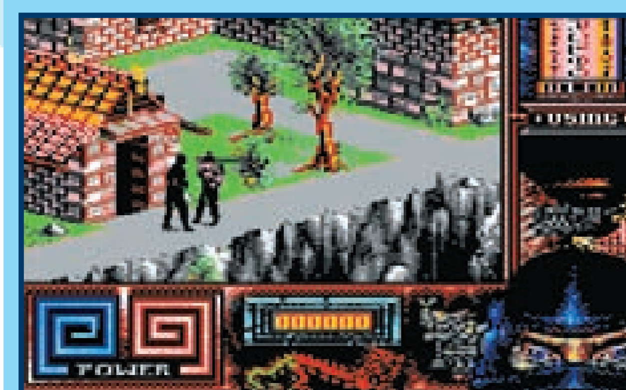
A: I have divided loyalty to two products. One is the *Last Ninja* trilogy which, for a long time, I never thought would be bettered. Then came *Mob Rule/StreetWars* – a thing that I love dearly. Although the current *Ninja* could tip the balance.

THE LAST NINJA 3



Seen by many as the best ever C64 game, System 3 pulled out all the stops with *The Last Ninja 3* – everything that had made the series so popular with gamers was increased tenfold.

Originally designed as a cartridge release, poor sales for the ailing C64 GS convinced System 3 to stick with the tape and disc format. Starting off with a stunning intro (remember, this was made in 1991 on a humble C64) the presentation was faultless. Highly detailed visuals, some marvellous music (by Reyn Ouwehand) and some great puzzles all came together perfectly. Even a small bug (some versions lacked the bellows you needed to complete level 4) did little to diminish the game's credibility. Armakuni's last C64 outing became the first game to score 100% in a review.



FLIMBO'S QUEST

Not to be confused with the bizarre Fimbles that recently invaded children's television, *Flimbo's Quest* was System 3's second stab at the platform genre. Bundled with the ill-fated C64 GS console and appearing on several other formats, the game saw you trying to rescue your beloved girlfriend from a suitably nefarious villain.

Production throughout the game was of a very high standard and contained suitably colourful visuals along with some fantastic bouncy tunes (by Reyn Ouwehand again). Flimbo himself was well-animated and, along with the standard platform moves, could leap down from platforms – he was also rather nifty with his sword (a good job too as this was a tough game).

Despite not showing as much originality as System 3's previous titles, *Flimbo's Quest* still proved to be extremely popular with critics and fans alike. It received numerous high scores in the mid-Nineties and became yet another feather in System 3's overcrowded cap.




1P 000100
1P
2:10



The original man on a mission **Renegade – Amstrad [Imagine] 1987**

Retro

Classic Machine



SPECIFICATIONS

The CPC's cross-purpose design (it could be used for business and pleasure) meant there was a lot going on under the casing.

Processor: Zilog Z80
Speed: 4 MHz
RAM: 64 KB
Colours: 27
Sound: 3 channels, 8 octaves +1 noise channel

AMSTRAD PC 464

OFTEN RIDICULED BY COMMODORE 64 AND SPECTRUM OWNERS, ALAN SUGAR'S CPC 464 WAS STILL A CLASSIC MACHINE AND WELL WORTH REVISITING

Upon its release in 1984, the Amstrad CPC 464 immediately stood apart from its rivals thanks to its innovative new features. For starters, you didn't have to worry about digging out your old tape deck from the loft, or waiting in line to use the living room TV, because the CPC was an all-in-one-system.

Of course, having the luxury of a built-in cassette deck and colour monitor complete with 27 different colours (or 27 shades of green if you had the monochrome version) came at a price. You could expect to pay a whopping £400 for the colour version of Amstrad's machine – compare this to the relatively low cost of the Spectrum (£175) and it was easy to see why one achieved mass-market success and the other didn't. As far as visuals and audio went, the Amstrad uncomfortably occupied the middle ground between the Spectrum and the Commodore 64.

While arguably a better looking and sounding machine than the Spectrum (although it did suffer from many ports because it shared the same processor), it always seemed to get ridiculed by C64 owners – a shame really, as it was a user-friendly machine and featured some great arcade conversions.

SIBLING RIVALRY

To complement the CPC 464, Amstrad released the 664 and the 6128. Both computers had floppy drives and proved to be very popular as business machines, especially the more powerful CPC 6128. Perhaps the strangest machine was the CPC 472. This was a special Spanish version that was made to avoid the tax on selling computers in Spain with less than 64Kb of RAM and no 'ñ' key. Eventually, all computers sold in Spain – even those with less than 64Kb – had to have a Spanish keyboard so Amstrad ended up making two versions.

"WHY I LOVE MY CPC 464"

Not only was the CPC 464 the first proper computer I ever owned, it was also responsible for bringing to my attention the 'my machine is better than yours' tirades that have since followed me for the rest of my gaming life. Even today I'll still dust the old bird off for a quick game (well, as quick as tapes can be) of _Dizzy_, _Target Renegade_ or _Solomon's Key_. Twenty years on and I'm still playing it – that's longevity for you...

Darran Jones

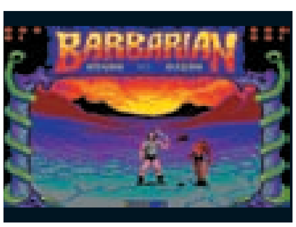
Six of the Best

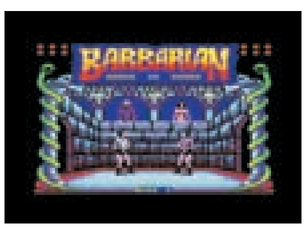
Though often subjected to hasty Spectrum ports, the Amstrad CPC 464 played host to a range of its own great titles. Like these…

BARBARIAN: THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

Publisher: **Palace**
Year: **1987**

It's safe to say that prepubescent gamers were as excited with *Barbarian*'s cover (depicting a scantily clad Maria Whittaker) as they were with the game itself. Those that dragged themselves away found a wonderfully playable fighter with copious bloodshed and some very challenging opponents. The best part, however, was undoubtedly the gruesome decapitations that resulted in a goblin dragging the body away whilst unceremoniously kicking the loser's head across the floor.



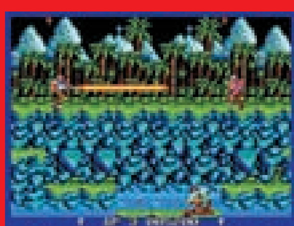


GRYZOR

Publisher: **Imagine**
Year: **1987**

Known throughout the world as either *Contra* or *Probotector*, *Gryzor* was yet another classic arcade conversion from those talented coders at Imagine. This classic scrolling shooter was packed full of detail and represented a real challenge to anyone with an itchy trigger figure. Once you got to the later levels, things got even more impressive (not to mention hectic) with some great 3D sections and some suitably tough bosses.

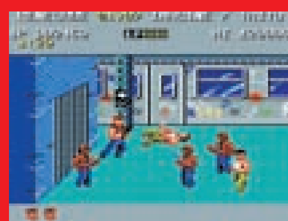




TARGET RENEGADE

Publisher: **Imagine**
Year: **1988**

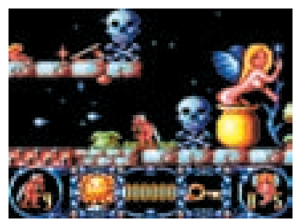
Forget the god-awful versions of *Double Dragon* that plagued all the home machines – this was how to do a perfect two-player beat-'em-up. After the superb Amstrad version of *Renegade*, Imagine's follow-up was a natural progression for the series. Ditching the gritty visuals of the original, *Target Renegade* featured cartoony sprites to complement the over-the-top action and gave you a whole host of weapons with which to attack your assailants. Believe us when we say you'll never look at a pool cue in the same way again.



STORMLORD

Publisher: **Hewson**
Year: **1989**

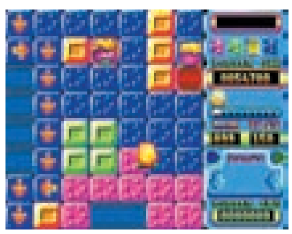
After the amazing successes of the *Cybernoid* games and *Exolon*, Raffaele Cecco cemented his reputation as a superb Amstrad programmer with the release of the gobsmackingly good *Stormlord*. Set in an amazing looking fantasy world (complete with massive mushrooms and semi-nude fairies) *Stormlord* was a fantastic platformer that saw you rescuing fairies from four different levels. Even the ridiculously hard difficulty setting did little to stem your enthusiasm for the later levels. All in all, an instant classic.



SKWEEK

Publisher: **Loricels**
Year: **1989**

Every console needs a good puzzler to keep the old grey matter ticking over and this offering from Loricels was no exception. Taking on the role of the eponymous Skweek, you were presented with 99 well-designed levels that had been covered blue by pesky aliens. Moving Skweek across the blue tiles turned them back to a more pleasing looking pink – cover the entire level and you'd move onto the next one. A plethora of power-ups, enemies and different types of tiles meant that *Skweek* lasted absolutely ages.



DRILLER

Publisher: **Incentive**
Year: **1987**

Easily the most ambitious game on the Amstrad, *Driller* was the first title to use the revolutionary Freescape engine (a new 3D program). The Ketars had abandoned their mining expeditions on Mitral and it was down to you to install 18 rigs so that the built-up gas could be safely dispersed. While playing *Driller* was an incredibly laborious process, there was no denying that this was something really special. Later Freescape games like *Dark Side* and *Castle Master* continued to push the CPC to its graphical limits



AMSTRAD

64k COLOUR PERSONAL COMPUTER



CPC 464 COLOUR

Classic Machine



Retro

CLASH OF THE TITANS

G•R•Y•Z•O•R



As gaming infiltrated the home market a new breed of gamer evolved. Dubbed the 'fanboy', he associated himself with a certain genre, machine or even a developer or publisher, and then ridiculed all that opposed him. First recorded in playgrounds in the early Eighties, typical arguments revolved around who had the better machine, or which game looked best on which format. We aim to put a stop of years of petty squabbling by finding the definitive versions of some classic titles. First up – Konami's 1987 scrolling shoot-'em-up, *Gryzor*.

ROUND 1: VISUALS

COMMODORE 64: 'Blocky' is the first word that springs to mind; your intrepid hero looks like he's just stepped out of a Lego factory and he's a laughable parody of the original game character. Colours are overly bright and do little to convey the grittiness of the original arcade game. Although the C64 features some lovely smooth scrolling, it simply isn't good enough.

SPECTRUM: Now this is more like it. Considering the Speccy's limitations *Gryzor* looks exceedingly close to its arcade parent. Characters throughout are instantly recognisable and there's some impressively smooth scrolling that not even the Amstrad CPC could manage. All in all, a very decent conversion that should please fans of the arcade game.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: Okay, so it may lack the scrolling of its 8-bit peers, but this is by far the best-looking version out of the three systems. Visuals are incredibly detailed and perfectly capture the essence of the arcade game. A truly Herculean effort that proves the CPC can really sing in the correct hands.

WINNER: AMSTRAD CPC 464
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

ROUND 2: AUDIO

COMMODORE 64: Some may say this is an unfair category considering the C64's excellent SID chip – and who are we to argue? Although this is far from Jason Brooke's best work, it plays throughout the game and enhances the gameplay.

SPECTRUM: So what if its sound chip is inferior to the C64's? The Spectrum puts up a surprisingly good fight and has the same tune on its title screen that features in the main game of the C64 version. In-game effects are rather sparse, but this is still a very strong effort.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: With those glorious visuals it was obvious that the Amstrad would suffer somewhere and, unfortunately, it's in the audio department. Music is limited to the 'game over' screen only and the in-game effects are lacklustre to say the least, which is a shame after such a strong showing in the 'Visuals' category. Easily the worst performer here.

WINNER: COMMODORE 64
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

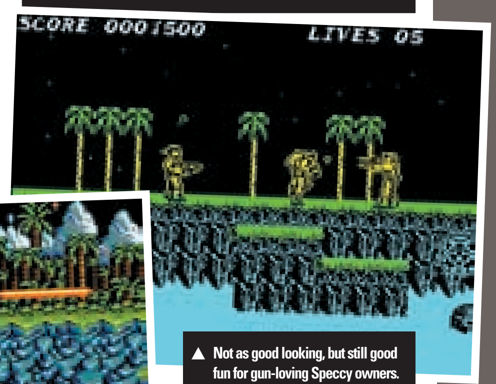
ROUND 3: GAMEPLAY

COMMODORE 64: What's going on here then? Jumping gives your character almost superhuman abilities and it's all too easy to mistime a jump and land on a bullet. The biggest fault, however, is having to use the space bar to jump even when using a joystick; it's poorly implemented and makes for some frustrating gameplay.

SPECTRUM: Controls are nice and responsive – it's a lot easier to time jumps and you always feel in control. Sadly, the frustrating need to press the space bar to jump is still present and once again causes problems that could have easily been avoided. Like the C64 version, it's best to play this on the keyboard.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: The simple ideas often work out the best. Rather than use a separate button to control your jumping, you simply press up on the joystick – genius! Add to this the same tight controls as the Spectrum version and an easily manageable jump and the CPC version emerges triumphant.

WINNER: AMSTRAD CPC 464
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM



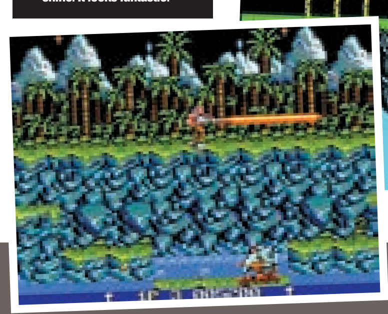
▲ Not as good looking, but still good fun for gun-loving Speccy owners.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Gryzor is quite simply one of the finest arcade conversions that the Amstrad has ever seen and is a testament to the game's programmers. The Spectrum version is well worth a look, but the Amstrad wins hands down and remains very playable to this day.

Amstrad CPC 464

▼ *Gryzor* on the Amstrad is really given a chance to shine. It looks fantastic.





GRYZOR (Various Home Systems) Ocean, 1987 – UK Advertisement

Classic game

Step-by-Step

CYBERNOID

A

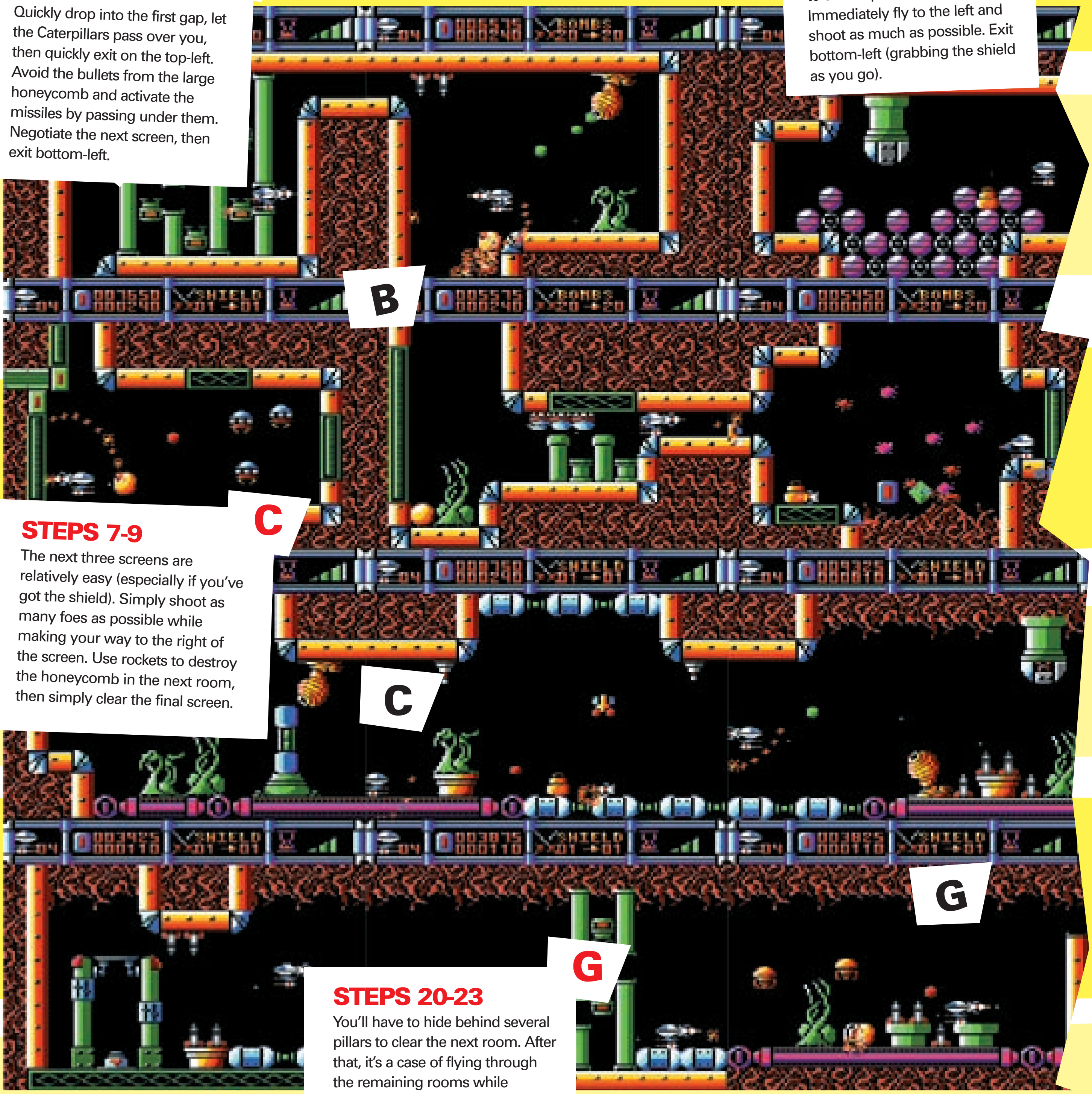
STEPS 1-3

Get past screen one's missiles, then use your rockets on the next to clear a path below you. Immediately fly to the left and shoot as much as possible. Exit bottom-left (grabbing the shield as you go).

B

STEPS 4-6

Quickly drop into the first gap, let the Caterpillars pass over you, then quickly exit on the top-left. Avoid the bullets from the large honeycomb and activate the missiles by passing under them. Negotiate the next screen, then exit bottom-left.



C

STEPS 7-9

The next three screens are relatively easy (especially if you've got the shield). Simply shoot as many foes as possible while making your way to the right of the screen. Use rockets to destroy the honeycomb in the next room, then simply clear the final screen.

G

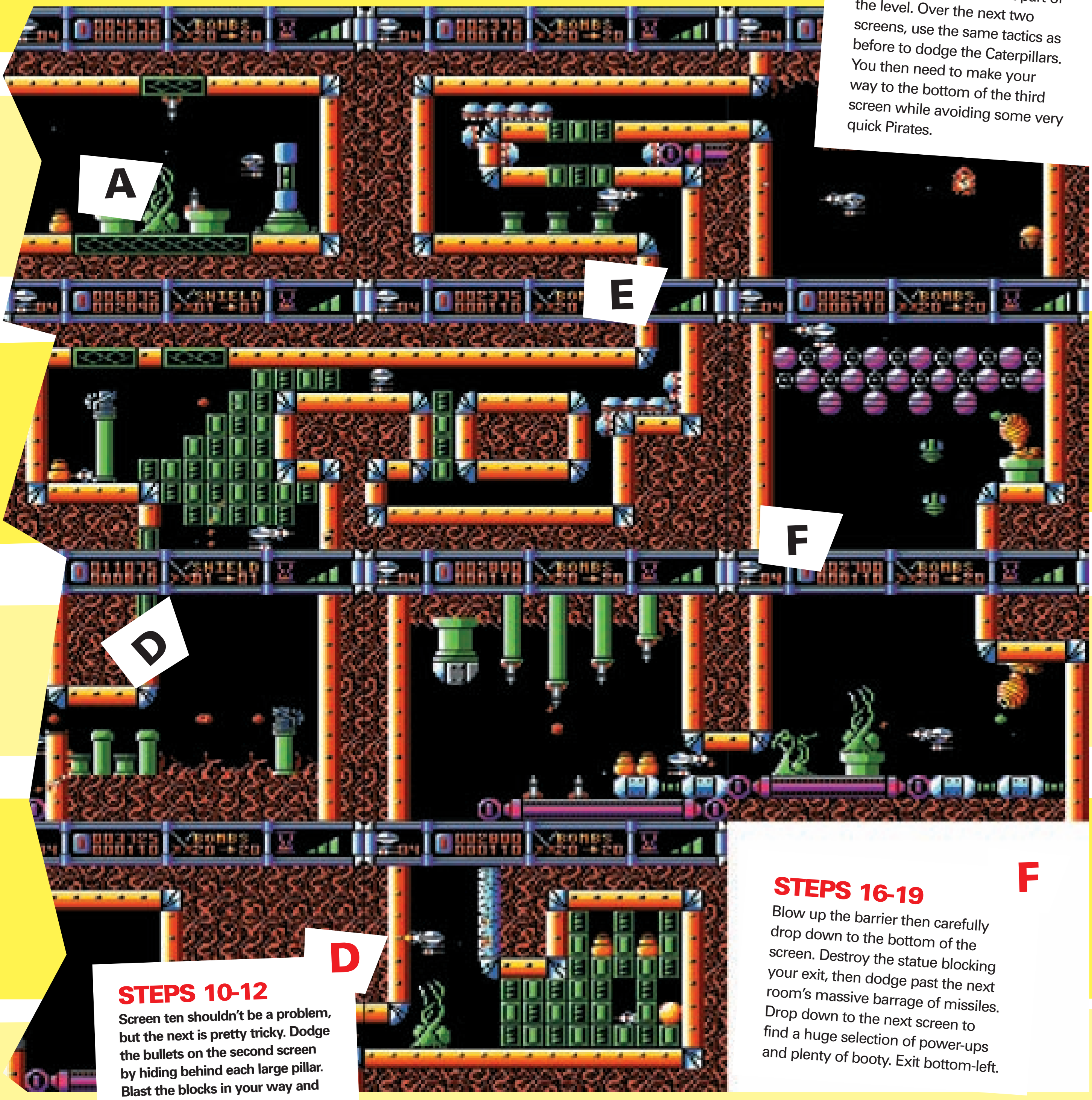
STEPS 20-23

You'll have to hide behind several pillars to clear the next room. After that, it's a case of flying through the remaining rooms while avoiding the Pirates. Then dock your ship and count your booty.

After the release of *Exolon*, Raffaele Cecco was on a winning streak that included the likes of *Stormlord* and the underrated *007: Licence To Kill*. His follow-up to *Exolon* was the excellent 1986 shooter *Cybernoid*, a hectic flick-screen title that tested gamers' reactions and sanity to their limits.

Despite the game's difficulty, the chance to traverse the highly detailed areas (well, for an Amstrad, anyway) and hunt down Space Pirates proved too good an opportunity to miss, and gamers were once again utterly entranced.

We'll guide you through the second stage of this rock-hard shoot-'em-up. Just don't say we didn't warn you about the difficulty level…



STEPS 13-15 — E

This is easily the hardest part of the level. Over the next two screens, use the same tactics as before to dodge the Caterpillars. You then need to make your way to the bottom of the third screen while avoiding some very quick Pirates.

STEPS 16-19 — F

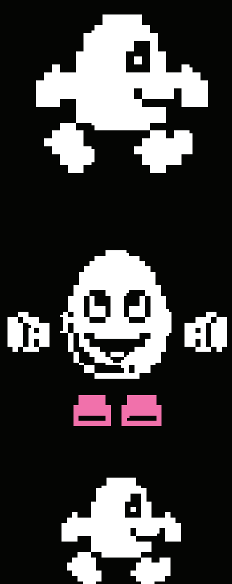
Blow up the barrier then carefully drop down to the bottom of the screen. Destroy the statue blocking your exit, then dodge past the next room's massive barrage of missiles. Drop down to the next screen to find a huge selection of power-ups and plenty of booty. Exit bottom-left.

STEPS 10-12 — D

Screen ten shouldn't be a problem, but the next is pretty tricky. Dodge the bullets on the second screen by hiding behind each large pillar. Blast the blocks in your way and exit top right.

Codemasters®

If there's one thing we miss from the days of 8-bit gaming, it's being able to buy a new game for £1.99. Codemasters was renowned for its top-quality, much-loved, budget-priced games, so we caught up with the 21st Century Codies to get the inside story



During the Eighties and Nineties, Codemasters excelled at producing extremely low-priced and, more importantly, extremely popular games and is now one of the biggest publishers in Europe – not bad going for a company founded by two 16-year-old brothers.

Formed in 1986, Codemasters initially consisted of David and Richard Darling and their father Jim. *BMX Simulator* (basically *Super Sprint* on bikes) was Codemasters' first release and made its debut on the Commodore 64. The game went to number one and stayed there for so long that it eventually won a longevity award from chart masters Gallup.

Thanks to *Grand Prix Simulator* by the Oliver twins, the *Simulator* series became very popular, and pretty soon Codemasters seemed to be simulating anything from golf to pub trivia – nothing was too obscure. Later games like *Pinball Simulator* and *Pro Tennis Simulator* created a much more realistic interpretation of the sport in question and created a trend for realism that still exists in Codemasters' current releases – *Colin McRae Rally* and *TOCA Race Driver* being prime examples.

It wasn't only software that Codemasters designed; the Game Genie was an extremely clever cheat device (very similar to the Action Replay) and after a lengthy battle with Nintendo (see 'I'll see you in court') it finally reached shops and made Codemasters an absolute fortune.

The J-Cart for the Mega Drive and a selection of CD compilations for the Commodore 64 and Spectrum were further examples of how far Codemasters was prepared to go to offer the best it could to gamers around the world.

Nowadays, Codemasters continues to deliver a versatile range of games and is behind some very popular franchises. We managed to catch up with with David Darling, founder and chairman of Codemasters, to find out about the old days.

When did you first start coding games?

Counting it up, it's over 20 years ago now – 1981. In those days we didn't even have keyboards, we worked using punch cards on the school computers.

How did you first get into games publishing?

We were developing from home under the name of Galactic Software, coding, copying up cassettes and selling games for the Commodore Vic 20, Dragon 32 and BBC by mail order through small ads in *Popular Computing Weekly*.

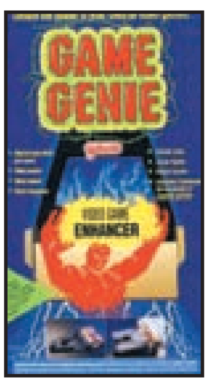
How was the jump in price from Codemasters to the Codemasters Plus range greeted by the public?

We always wanted to offer value for money, so with the Codemasters Plus range there would be the main game on one cassette and a second tape with additional levels, alternative game modes and special modes for specific machines such as the Spectrum 128K.

Your Simulator range was very successful, any chance of reviving it?

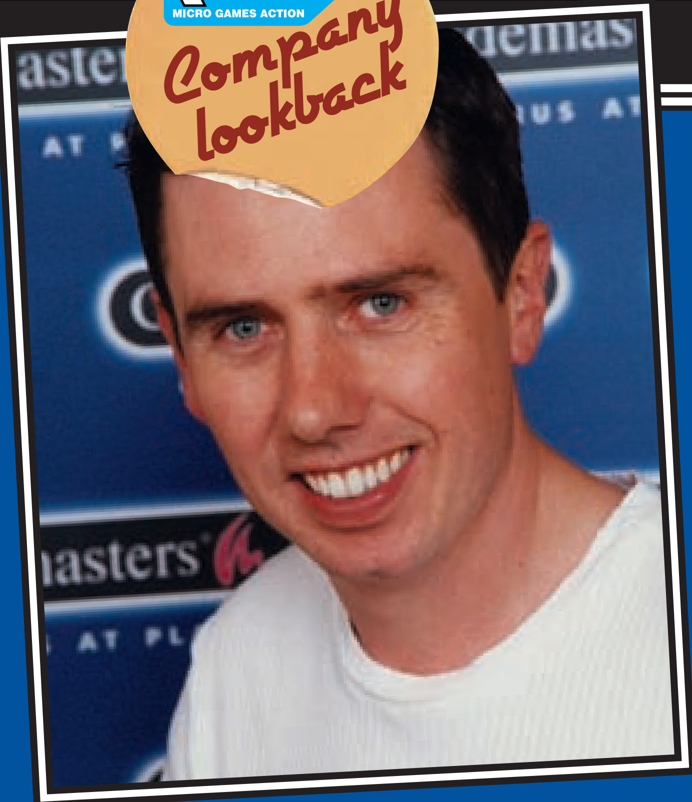
In a kind of way the *Simulator* range has lived on, at least in the authenticity of our games with titles such as *Colin McRae Rally*,

I'll see you in court



Nintendo has always fervently guarded its products and is very wary of anyone who attempts to pirate or alter its games – so when Codemasters was getting ready to release its Game Genie all hell broke loose…

The Game Genie essentially enabled gamers to hack into the code of NES (and later, SNES) titles and change parameters within the games. Nintendo was furious with this, claiming it infringed on its copyright. The battle between David and Goliath had begun and, just like the story, the giant eventually lost. After four years and much stress for the Darlings, the case was eventually closed in their favour and Codemasters received $15 million from Nintendo. Once the Game Genie eventually went on sale it managed to net the tenacious Brits a cool $140 million. A huge figure back in 1990 and something that probably helped Codemasters get where it is today.



▲ David Darling set up Codemasters with his brother Richard when they were both just 16. Tsk, kids, eh? Always up to something…

TOCA Race Driver and the *Club Football* series. Bringing out realism and an authentic experience through gameplay is still very important for us.

Is there any Simulator title you wished you had made, and if so, why?

It's hard to think – we did most of them and then probably exhausted our list.

Dizzy was also incredibly successful for you. Will he ever reappear, perhaps on the GBA?

Dizzy, created by The Oliver twins who now run Blitz Games, was great for his day and proved very popular with gamers. Who knows if we will ever see his like again?

Do you think games were better in the old days?

They were really playable and provided incredibly fresh entertaining experiences at the time. It's sometimes better to enjoy the nostalgia when you re-look at them. It's amazing how gameplay has come on over the years.

How did you come up with the firm's name?

After many a discussion, we ended up with a huge list. We nearly called the company Computer Food (The Best Thing To Feed Your Computer) but changed our minds after a few days. So from our original big list, Codemasters was the one we all agreed on.

And whose idea was it to blatantly plug your products on the back of each game?

It's just like adding a personality to the games. Many developers were faceless then and it connects the players to the creator.

What are your favourite Codemasters games?

Dizzy, *Micro Machines*, *Colin* and *TOCA* – they were the ones I return to a lot, but obviously we've enjoyed every game, we've got great teams here.

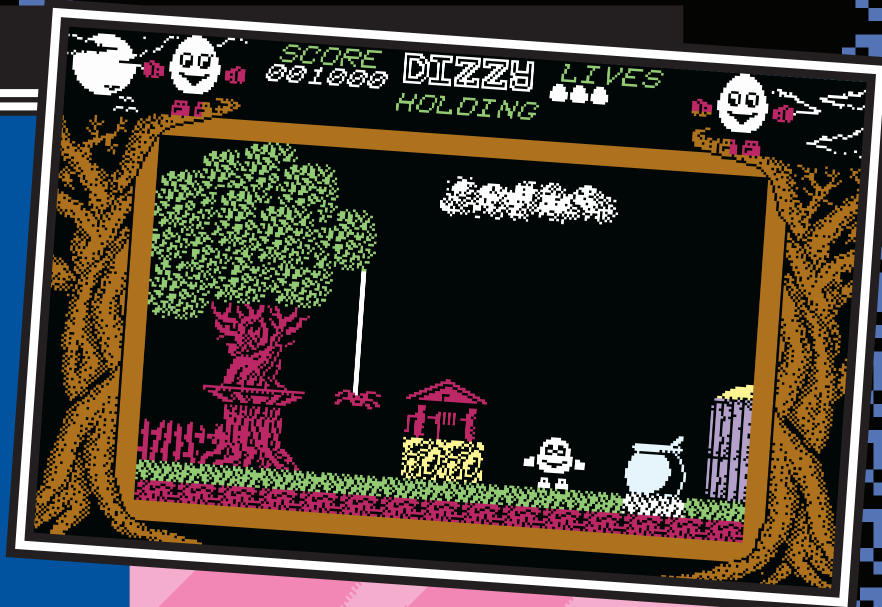
What other titles do you admire?

Metal Gear Solid and *Halo* still eat up my spare time.

What's your company ethos and how much has it changed since the beginning?

Innovation, gameplay, honesty and realism in game content – we still focus on delivering the key elements gamers want.

Collating a selection of your hits on a CD for the Spectrum was a masterstroke. How did it come about?



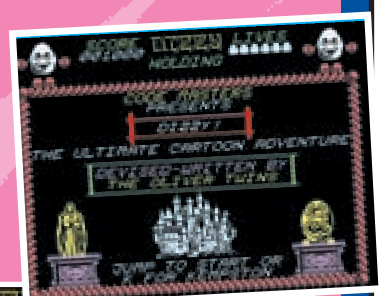
Feeling Dizzy

Codemasters had a massive hit and a very lucrative franchise on its hands when the Oliver twins created the loveable egg Dizzy. The game's premise was as simple and charming as its main character – the evil wizard Zaks was up to no good and needed to be defeated. It was down to Dizzy to collect four ingredients and create a magical potion that would kill the wicked sorcerer (although he somehow managed to keep on reappearing for the many sequels).

What followed was a classic platform/adventure title that saw you traversing the flick-screen environments and solving fairly simple puzzles. Like many games of old, certain sections of *Dizzy* required precision jumping and timing, with one segment in particular being especially dangerous… A section of the Haunted Forest contained an extremely devious trap; if you failed to cross at the correct place the ground would fall away and you'd be trapped, unable to complete the game.

Despite this small flaw, *Dizzy* was still a huge success and later appeared in 14 sequels and spin-offs. He appeared on a variety of formats including the 8-bit consoles and 16-bit computers and even has dedicated websites like Dizzy's Domain at www.samsolutions.co.uk/dizzy/.

Dizzy still has plenty of charm and many of his titles are as playable today as they were then – even stinkers like *Fast Food* (an uninspired *Pac-Man* rip-off) did little to crack the little fella's shell. Now all we need is for all his titles to reappear on the GBA.





Codemasters

The CD Games Collection rode on the boom of CD players coming into the home. It was quite a technical achievement for the time, especially connecting them to a Spectrum or Commodore 64. We'd been building up our expertise in developing hardware as well as software and it came through from a bright idea and lots of experimentation.

Micro Machines was a superb title and extremely similar to the Simulators of old. Was this a conscious decision?

Not really. Andrew Graham was the creator of the original *Micro Machines* and he also wrote some of the *Simulators*, such as *Pro Ski Simulator* on the Amiga. He's really good at core gameplay mechanics.

Q: How hard was it to break into the US market?

It's always easier in your home market because you can intuitively sense if something is going to work in it or not. We tried breaking into the US about seven years ago, at the same time we were setting up our French and German offices. We thought we'd better concentrate on setting them up successfully first and they've been remarkably successful. It's really in the last few years we've been building up our US operation and putting significant efforts into the US infrastructure, product development and so on, it's now starting to pay off. In 2002 we had our first US number one, *Operation Flashpoint*, and last year we launched the *IndyCar* series – the official game of the US motorsport. We want to do over there what we've done over here in Europe for motorsport gaming with the *McRae Rally* and *TOCA* series.

Your Game Genie court case was a classic case of David Vs Goliath. How stressful was it taking on the might of a company like Nintendo?

It was stressful in the kind of way that really focuses you, but we never stopped believing in our product or our arguments.

And how did you feel when the court ruled in your favour?

Relieved!

What was it like appearing on Number 73 [ancient Saturday morning kids' show] and were they all as mad as they looked?

They were all really great and it was fun to be in the middle of a TV show being made. You usually only see it from the outside. It's really quite hectic.

You've been in the industry for a very long time now; how does everything compare to when you first started?

It's very different in some ways – it is a really massive industry now, very professional, a proper mass entertainment industry, but we still love making games and playing games, that's still the same.

Mark my words

In the late Eighties, the Codies (as they were affectionately known) were the masters of hyperbole. Although quotes appeared on many game boxes, it wasn't very often that they came from the actual head of a company. Here are a few of Codemasters' most over-the-top, objective comments…

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY SIMULATOR

"An amazing mixture of strategy and fast action – definitely the best rugby game, ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT!"

BMX SIMULATOR 2

"BMX 2 makes the others eat dirt! – It's so realistic, and with FOUR PLAYERS it's CRUCIAL!!!"

TWIN TURBO V8

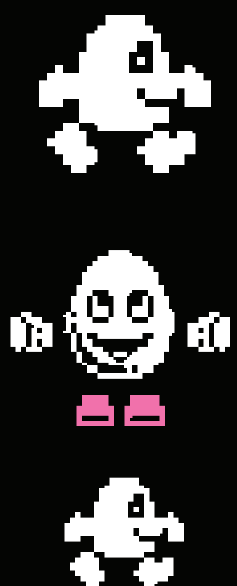
"The Fastest road game I've ever seen on the Amstrad – amazingly playable, just like real performance car driving!!!"

GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR 2

"I'm utterly gobsmacked! This is REALLY GOOD – I think that this is the best Oliver Twins game ever!"

TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY

"Dizzy's Treasure Island is brilliant – it's like a real cartoon but with amazing gameplay"



Better than life

So what if your car simply consisted of a rectangle with a pixel to show the front? Who cared if you only got to race against one other opponent and that it was a complete rip-off of *Super Sprint*? We certainly didn't.

Despite its rather limited looks there was no denying that the Oliver twins' *Grand Prix Simulator* was a fantastic title. First appearing on the Amstrad CPC 464 before being ported to the C64 and Spectrum, *Grand Prix Simulator*'s grand claims to be an actual sim were tenuous. You couldn't upgrade your vehicles, a simple turn could send you skidding into oblivion and the cars often got stuck on parts of the track.

What the Oliver twins did deliver, though, was a highly enjoyable and competitive game (especially against another player) and it cemented Codemasters' reputation so much that the *Simulator* name was almost as big a draw as its *Dizzy* titles. A sequel appeared in 1989 with improved visuals and a third vehicle. Though a much better game, it didn't have the wow factor of the original (but digitised speech was a vast improvement).





MUSIC MAN: DAVID WHITTAKER

David Whittaker was just one of the many programmers who worked wonders with various sound chips in the days of 8 and 16-bit computers. **games™** finds out what it was like working for Codemasters and being a part of the gaming scene in general.

How and when did you first get into programming?

I used to buy *Your Computer* magazine even before I had, or could afford, a computer back in about 1980. I read all the programming articles in depth, so I suppose I could program even before I had something to program with. I couldn't afford a ZX81 (as it was mail order-only then) so I got a Vic 20 for my birthday in 1982, on 'the drip' from Dixons. But I couldn't afford a cassette deck so all the programs I typed in had to work first time or the machine would crash. Even then, I lost it all when I turned it off. This taught me to be really precise and I learned to correct all the many errors in the Commodore manual (including the later CBM-64 manual, which was little better).

What was it like working for Codemasters on some of its classic titles?

Good and bad. They gave me lots of work, but they paid peanuts.

You've come up with some great tunes for the likes of Treasure Island Dizzy, BMX Simulator and the Grand Prix series. What was your favourite piece of Codemasters music you wrote?

I don't really have one – I can't remember most of them. Maybe the *Count Dracula* one, or *Poltergeist*.

Were the old days better for games?

Yes, because the industry was so small, and most people knew each other so it was much less corporate. At the time, everything was new and exciting but now it's all marketing BS.

How much has the music side of the industry changed?

Drastically. In the old days, you had to have so many skills, not just composing or arranging – you had to be a programmer too, which is what really interested me, more than the music. You had to work so hard to get anything decent out of the crappy (but much-loved) sound chips.

So what are you up to at the moment?

I'm working for Jester Interactive [creators of the *Music* games] in North Wales, as senior audio dude. www.jesterinteractive.com.



Eating dirt in style

Colin McRae 3 may have been a masterful display of graphical engineering but underneath the surface gloss was a somewhat soulless experience. Thank god, then, for *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* on the humble PlayStation. Here was the perfect example of a title that took an already great game and transformed it into something even better. Everything about the game was perfect; the graphics engine had received a much-needed overhaul, loading times had suitably shortened and the gameplay had been greatly improved. *McRae*'s physics engine was also (at the time) a technical marvel thanks to borrowing heavily from the designers of Codemasters' excellent *TOCA* series. With 13 cars to choose from, a highly addictive Championship mode and some of the most spectacular crashes seen at the time, *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* earned its reputation as one of the best rally games on a home system. The fact that we still blow the dust off our PlayStations to play it says it all. Even the updated charms of *Colin McRae Rally '04* weren't enough to beat *2.0*.

Small but perfectly formed

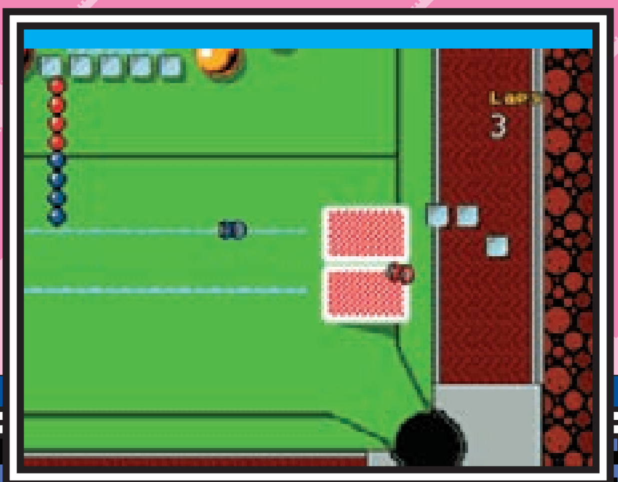
Micro Machines appeared on the Mega Drive in 1991 and remains one of the most playable racers to this day. Not only was the game superb fun, it also made excellent use of the Galoob licence upon which it was based (you know, those tiny model cars that came in packs of five).

Using toy cars (as well as boats, tanks and a selection of other vehicles) enabled Codemasters to let you race on some of the most bizarre circuits ever seen. Stand-out tracks included a breakfast table, complete with bowls, spilt milk and cereal to negotiate, and a workshop with all manner of tools and other dangerous objects to avoid. The most fun, though, was taking to your dragster and racing around a toilet seat – tough, but still incredibly enjoyable.

Another great aspect of the series was the fantastic multiplayer aspect. While the original game only allowed two players to compete against each other, *Micro Machines 2* took the multiplayer madness of Party mode even further by allowing up to eight-player participation.

Codemasters had kindly created a new J-cart that came complete with two joystick ports (no need for a Multitap) and some clever programming enabled two players to share one joypad.

With *Micro Machines* offering so much multiplayer joy over the last 13 years we're still amazed how Infogrames' Sheffield House managed to make such a hash of the 128-bit versions. Here's hoping Codemasters gets the licence back and give the series the glory it deserves.





ATARI 2600 VCS

WHETHER IT WAS PAC-MAN, DEFENDER OR SPACE INVADERS, ATARI'S 2600 VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM (VCS) OFFERED GAMERS ALL THE BEST TITLES. HOWEVER, WHAT STARTED SO WELL WOULD COME TUMBLING DOWN AT A MEMORABLE LOW POINT IN EIGHTIES GAMING HISTORY

Released in America in 1977, many see the Atari 2600 VCS as the true beginning of videogaming as we know it. The system, which came packaged with two CX40 joysticks and a CX30 paddle controller (which was particularly suitable for games such as *Pong*), featured six silver switches, a cartridge slot, and sported a decidedly Seventies-looking woodgrain and black plastic finish. These 'Woodies', as they're now called by collectors, were robust and could withstand even the most energetic gaming.

Going on sale at $200 (£123), initial sales of the system were slow, but Warner Communications (which had bought Atari for $28 million a year previously) wasn't going to sit back and watch its product flop. Over the next few years the company managed to secure an impressive number of exclusive titles for the format (both in-house and third-party), and by 1980 the console was booming. In fact, Christmas that year turned out to be a disappointment for many children as Atari simply couldn't manufacture enough hardware to meet the demand, and the system sold out. It was later revealed that the company had made a record profit of $2 billion during that year.

However, with confidence now overflowing from its runaway success, Atari was becoming complacent, and the 2600 started to be inundated with poor-quality releases. By 1983 the market could no longer support the amount of tat that was being churned out and the videogames industry went into a decline. During that year, many smaller developers went out of business, and Atari posted a net loss of $533 million – mostly due to the overproduction of unpopular titles. A short while later, reports were issued suggesting that a large number of unsold Atari cartridges were being buried in the desert, and it seemed that the company's grip on the videogames industry was finally at an end.

Despite the demise of the 2600 VCS, Atari remained competitive in the industry for a further four years, with cheaper, more compact versions of the console continuing to sell at a steady rate. But during 1988 the company managed to lose another $84.8 million, and with the NES dominating the market it was impossible for it to regain its foothold. Atari would never again enjoy the success it had had in 1980. Of course, with Infogrames now officially calling itself Atari (after acquiring the company nearly four years ago), that may change in the near future…

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU (Central Processing Unit): 8-bit MOS Technology
CPU Speed: 1.19 MHz
GPU (Graphics Processing Unit): 'STELLA' TIA (Television Interface Adapter)
GPU Speed: 1.19Mhz
Memory: Main RAM (Random Access Memory): 128 Bytes
Resolution: 320 x 200
Colours: 256
Maximum Colours Displayed At Once: 16
Sound Channels: 2



◀ The Atari 2600 VCS was a well-built machine that was seen by many as the first true console. Sadly, the industry slump of 1983 hit Atari hard and the 2600 faded away.

SIX OF THE BEST

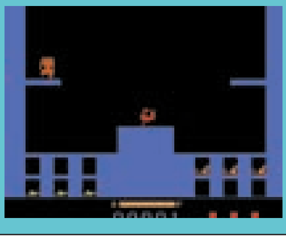
Here are six great titles that were available for the Atari 2600. They may look simplistic now, but believe us – at the time these were at the cutting edge of electronic videogames. Forget Grand Theft Auto and check out these beauties…

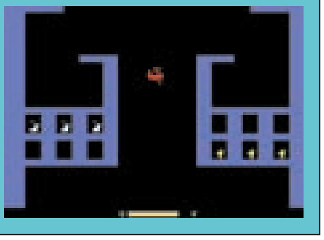
SKY SKIPPER

Publisher: **Parker Brothers**
Year: **1983**

Based on a Nintendo arcade game, the main objective in *Sky Skipper* was simply to save caged animals that were being held captive by a gorilla. This was achieved by temporarily knocking him out with bombs, then collecting the animals in your biplane – a task that was made more difficult by the limited amount of fuel you were given at the start of each mission.

Although translated by the Parker Brothers, the game managed to maintain the quality of a Nintendo release – right down to the cutesy visuals.





POLE POSITION

Publisher: **Atari**
Year: **1983**

Once one of the most popular non-character-based videogames of all time, *Pole Position* was featured in the 1985 children's film, *D.A.R.Y.L.* Now merely just another retro racing game, *Pole Position* was extremely popular thanks to its instant pick-up and-play quality – rather than reaching checkpoints, the objective was simply to pass enough rivals in a set time.

Good looking and fast moving, the game blended realism (well, it was realistic as you could hope for back then) with all the thrills, spills and excitement of an arcade racer.

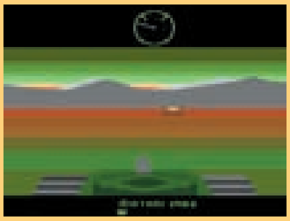


BATTLEZONE

Publisher: **Atari**
Year: **1983**

Based on the 1980 coin-op by Ed Rotberg, *Battlezone* was an early tank simulator in which you had to destroy enemy battalions, jet fighters and even flying saucers. The original arcade version of the game featured twin joysticks to accentuate the feeling of driving a tank, and while this control feature was obviously removed from the home version, many felt that the 2600 conversion was more playable.

Amazingly, it was possible to get enemies shooting at each other by using those in close range to shield you from others that were further away.



PITFALL

Publisher: **Activision**
Year: **1982**

Playing as jungle explorer Pitfall Harry, the objective of *Pitfall* was simply to collect treasure while avoiding all the dangers of the jungle – sort of like *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here*, only much more realistic and amusing.

You began the game with 2,000 points and more could be earned by collecting money, silver, gold and diamonds. However, each time you made a mistake (which was fairly regularly – this was a tricky game) points were lost.

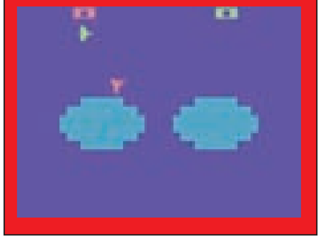


COMBAT

Publisher: **Atari**
Year: **1978**

Also known as *Tank Plus*, *Combat* came packaged with the 2600 and featured a massive 27 games all based around a combat theme. Much like *Mario Party* or *Super Monkey Ball*, the game offered a decent enough single-player mode, though it was the multiplayer option that really added to the overall longevity.

Space Invaders, on the other hand (which was available at the same time), initially attracted people to the machine, though many gamers found that it became samey far too quickly. Not a problem for *Combat*…



MARIO BROS.

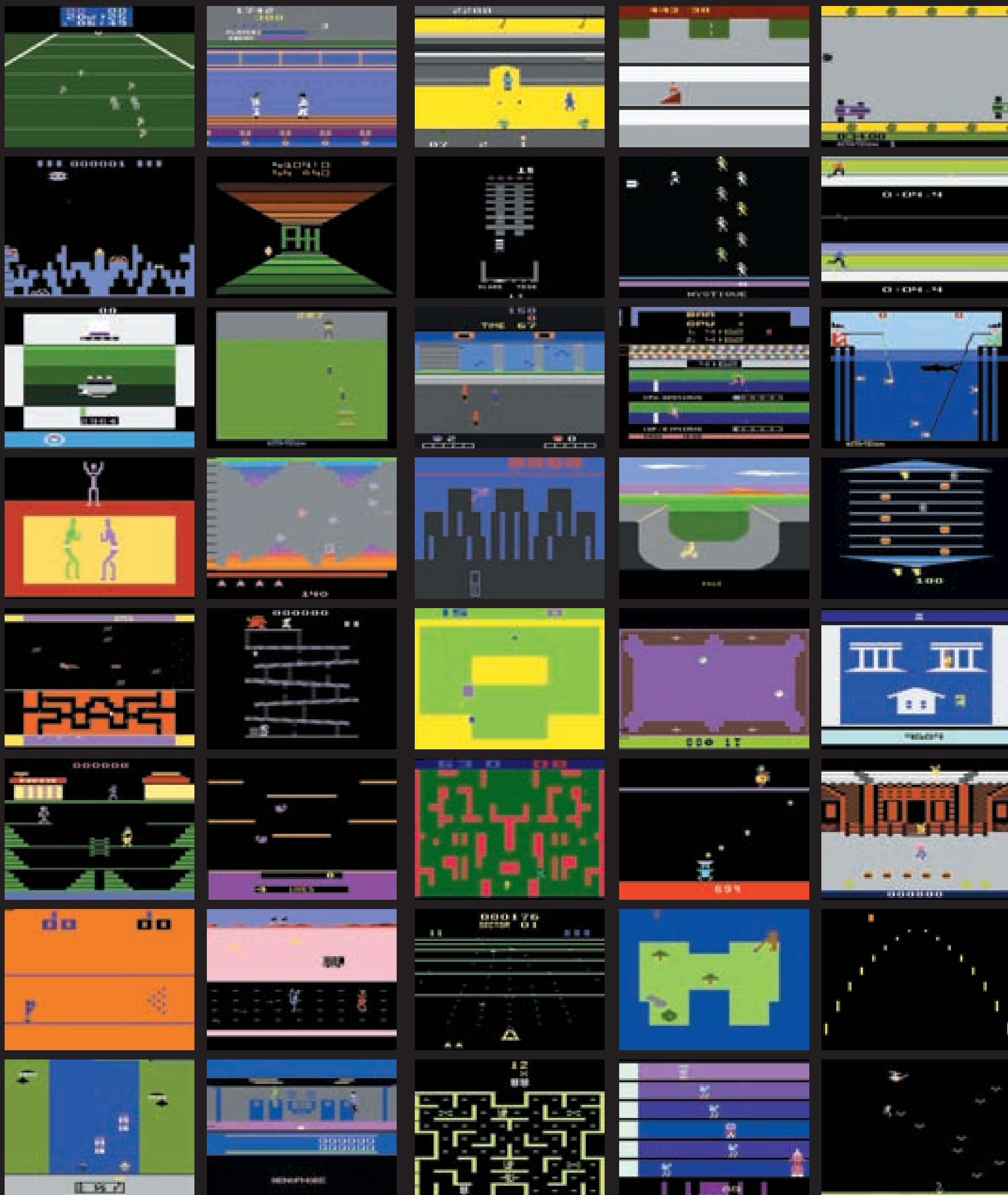
Publisher: **Atari**
Year: **1983**

The original *Mario Bros.* was included as a bonus feature with *Super Mario Bros. 3* on the NES and with each of the *Mario* translations on GBA. However, it was sold as a standalone title when Atari published it for the 2600 back in 1983.

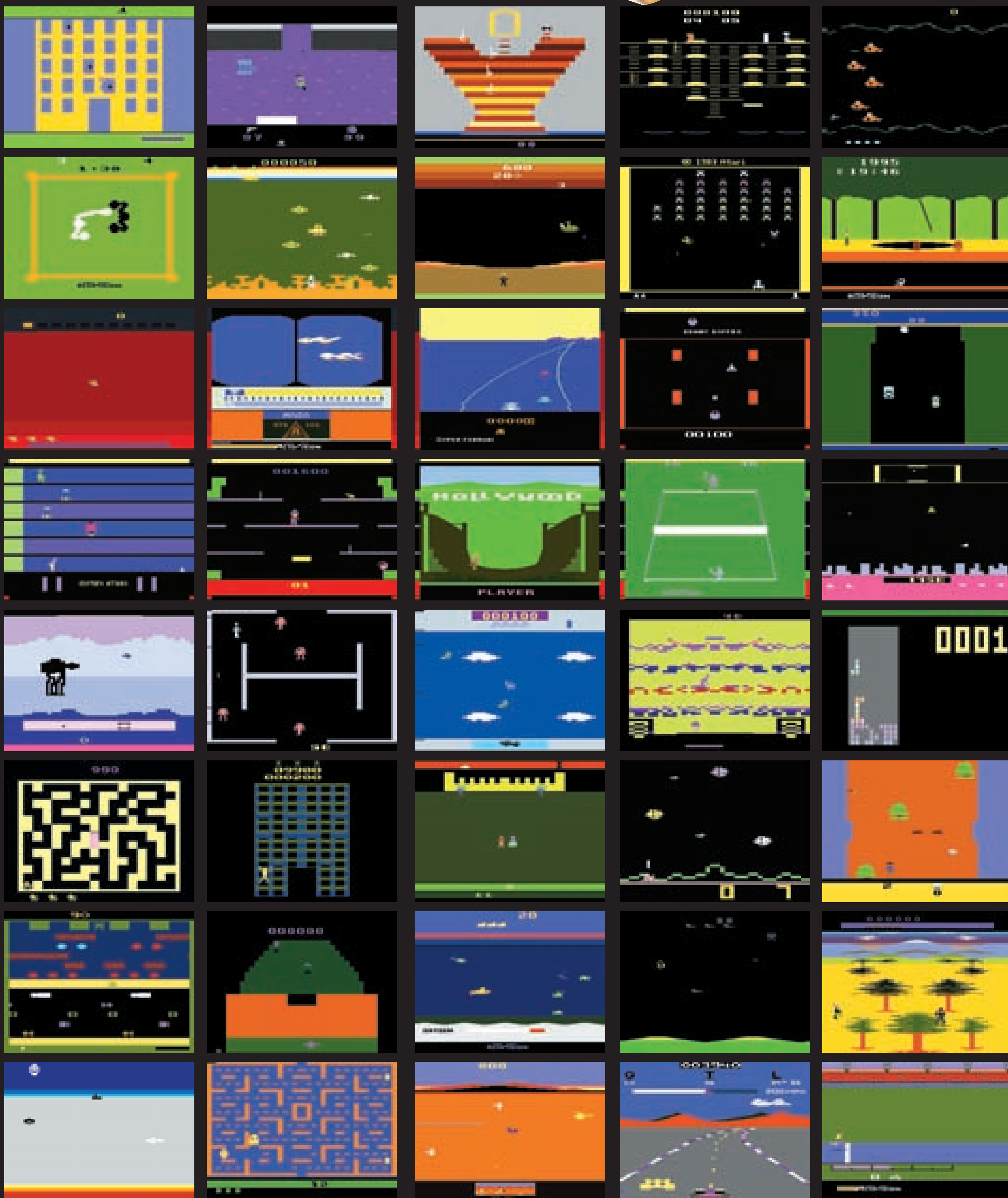
Using either Mario or Luigi, the aim of the game was simply to destroy creatures that came out of pipes by knocking them onto their backs then stamping on them. Simple compared to later *Mario* games, but great fun nonetheless.



ATARI 2600 VCS



Classic Machine









Though it may seem an obvious choice, Pong could be the greatest retro game of all time for the most unlikely reasons…

P•O•N•G

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

Format: **Arcade, Atari 2600, GBC, Macintosh, PC, PSone, Everything else…**
Publisher: **Atari**
Developer: **In-House**
Release date: **1972**



▲ Looks aren't everything, particularly if you're *Pong*. Or a lonely ugly person.

Released in November 1972, *Pong* truly was one of the first mass-market computer games, thanks to its simplistic yet thoroughly enjoyable gameplay. As *Pong* is perhaps the most famous coin-op of all time, you're probably aware that the aim was simply to keep a ball in play, much like tennis. This was achieved by moving a small deflector up and down your side of the screen by twisting a dial known as a paddle.

Contrary to popular belief, though, *Pong* wasn't actually the first game to do this. Computer engineers had been creating basic interactive programs since the early Fifties, but the enormous manufacturing costs, combined with the unreliability of such early technology, had meant that general release simply wasn't an option. As the years passed, however, the technology gradually became more stable, and in 1958 an employee of the Brookhaven National Laboratories, Willy Higginbotham, created *Tennis For Two*. Practically identical to *Pong*, *Tennis For Two* was a simplistic and really rather abstract representation of a tennis match, designed to be played by two people. Enjoyable as it was, the system was only up and running for two years before it was dismantled and the parts reused for other projects.

It would be more than a decade before those technological advancements of the Fifties would be used to create a general release amusement product, the first being 1971's *Computer Space*. Designed by Nolan Bushnell (who would later go on to produce *Pong*), the gameplay consisted of little more than blowing up UFOs in a rocket ship – a task which, for some reason, was a little too complicated for early gamers. The machine was a flop.

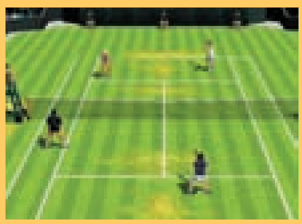
It was also during 1971 that Magnavox signed an agreement to manufacture the first home videogame console, the Odyssey. Developed during the Sixties under the name of Brown Box, the Odyssey was designed by 'the father of videogames', Ralph Baer, who pioneered gaming throughout the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies. The system eventually went on sale the same year that *Pong* was launched at a whopping $100 (approximately £62) and came packaged with six games, one of which was a simple tennis game. Interestingly, Bushnell had played the game at one of the preview showings of the Odyssey and was clearly influenced by it.

So why suggest that *Pong* could be the 'greatest retro game ever' if it merely copied other games that had gone before it? Well, the answer is purely down to the inordinate level of success that the coin-op enjoyed compared to other similar projects, and compared to Magnavox's virtually forgotten Odyssey game. Numerous stories report how *Pong* machines would regularly break down due to being overloaded with quarters, and that punters would queue up outside bars just to have a go on it.

As games go, then, *Pong* pretty much single-handedly proved that electronic gaming was a credible form of entertainment, and one that could, in fact, generate an enormous profit. Perhaps if it hadn't done so well, fewer companies would have begun creating videogames, and many great titles may never have existed.

Pong and on and on…

Okay, so things have moved on since *Pong* was released in 1972, but have they really progressed that far? While new technology allows for all kinds of impressive new graphical capabilities, many games still rely on the winning formula of reflex-testing target hitting (even things like Air Hockey). And when you look at something like *Virtua Tennis*, you have to wonder if that's what Willy Higginbotham *meant* to make, but lacked the technology.

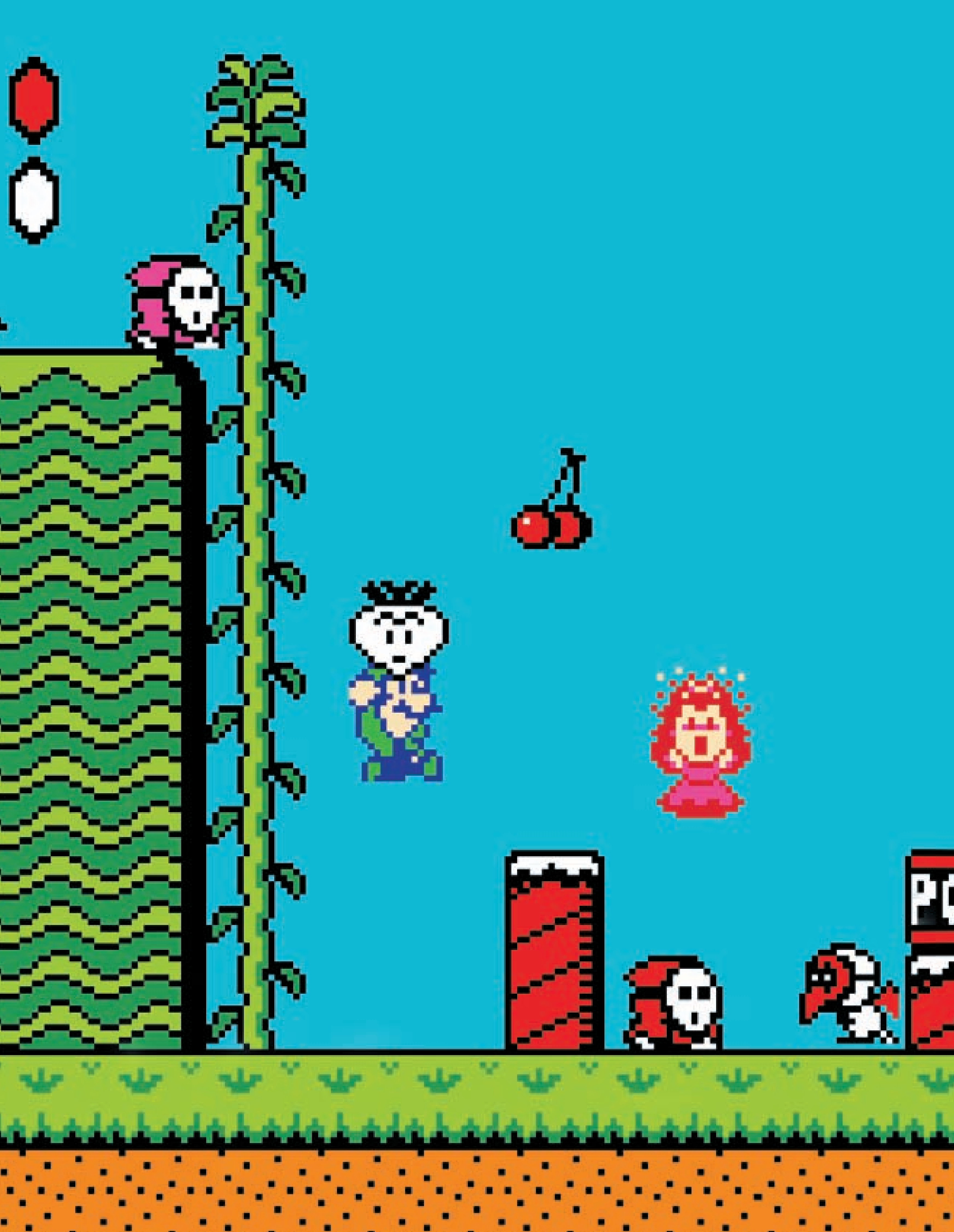




▶ Okay, they *look* different, but they're essentially *Pong* tarted up a bit. Kind of.



M NETWORK TITLES (Atari VCS, Sears Video Arcade System) Mattel, 1982 – US Advertisement





When is a Mario game not a Mario game? **Super Mario Bros 2 – NES [Nintendo] 1988**



SPECIFICATIONS

CPU (Central Processing Unit): Ricoh Custom 8-bit 6502 NMOS (Negative-channel Metal Oxide Semiconductor)
CPU Speed: 1.79Mhz
PPU (Picture Processing Unit): 8-bit
Memory: Main RAM (Random Access Memory): 16Kbit (2Kbyte); Video RAM: 16Kbit (2Kbyte)
Resolution: 256 x 240
Sprites: Maximum Number Of Sprites Per Line: 8; Maximum Sprite Size: 8 x 16 pixels; Minimum Sprite Size: 8 x 8 pixels
Colour: Colours Available: 52; Maximum Colours Displayed At Once: 16; Maximum Colours Per Sprite: 4
Sound: 5 Channel Mono PSG (Programmable Sound Generator)

Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM *NES VERSION*

Although many regard the SNES as the greatest console ever made, we mustn't forget that without the NES, Nintendo's Super hardware may never have existed. Besides, the NES was a great little machine in its own right – not only was it great value for money, but it also boasted some of the finest games ever created



The big year was 1983 – the year that saw the beginning of modern console gaming. Nintendo Of Japan had started developing videogames a number of years previously and president Hiroshi Yamauchi had seen the potential of Nintendo releasing its own system in the home. In fact, he'd begun making plans for the machine in 1980, when he, lead designer Masayuki Uemura and a technician first started researching the best way to create an inexpensive chipset that could outperform its rivals.

Yamauchi-san had set a target retail price of ¥9,800 (£52) and Uemura-san's initial plan to include a 16-bit processor was thrown out in favour of a more affordable 8-bit alternative. Even then, Nintendo faced problems finding a company willing to produce the chips at an affordable price – many simply couldn't afford to gamble their future on the back of a product that might be a complete flop. However, after vigorous negotiation, Yamauchi-san secured a deal with Ricoh, who even then only signed the deal because an initial order of three million pieces was made. This was an even bigger gamble for Nintendo, but then neither company could predict that more than 60 million NES units would be sold worldwide.

The NES launched in Japan in 1983 for approximately £20 more than Yamauchi-san's original plan. Even so, the Famicom (as it was known in Japan, the name being short for 'family computer') was extremely popular with gamers. Unfortunately, a slight flaw with the first batch of chipsets caused some games to freeze and, after much consideration, Nintendo recalled the entire first shipment. This could easily have finished Nintendo off for good, but consumers admired the

THE LATEST FASHION

Although most people remember the box-like grey NES that was released in the west, the Japanese Famicom looked completely different. Not only did the cartridges slot into the top instead of the front, but the machine was smaller, flatter and coloured beige and maroon. A redesigned NES was also released in Japan and America in 1993 and was sold as a console for beginners. Bundled with *Final Fantasy 1&2*, more than one million units were shifted.



LEADER OF THE PACK

Numerous NES packs have been released over the years, though possibly the most amusing (and misguided) was the 'Original Set' which retailed in the States for $250 (£155) and included the control deck, two controllers, the Zapper light gun and the strangest item of all, ROB (Robotic Operation Buddy). This was basically a 25cm-high robot that did little more than stack up coloured discs according to your actions in a game called *Gyromite*, which also came packaged with the system. Also included was lightgun game *Duck Hunt* which, because of its pick up and play appeal, was decidedly more popular than *Gyromite*. Nintendo soon realised that production of ROB wasn't financially viable and quickly introduced its second pack, the 'Action Set'. This omitted ROB and *Gyromite* in favour of popular platform game *Super Mario Bros* and sold for a more affordable $200 (£125).







Classic Machine

way the company swiftly dealt with the issue and in no time at all things were back on track.

Two years later, Nintendo was faced with another tricky task – launching the NES in America. Due to an enormous number of poor-quality game releases during 1983, the western videogames industry was in turmoil, with many retailers vowing never to stock videogames or consoles ever again. However, Hiroshi Yamauchi used the situation to Nintendo's advantage. By introducing the Nintendo Seal Of Quality, Nintendo was able to control what games were released on its system while making huge profits from the licensing costs at the same time.

Atari had been hit hard by the crash and with its own systems and games being sold off for as little as ten per cent of the recommended retail price, the company agreed to distribute the NES in America. The deal was ready to be signed, but then a misunderstanding on Atari's part led to the contract being abandoned at the last minute. However, Nintendo soldiered on and eventually Minoru Arakawa (the then president of Nintendo Of America) managed to persuade one New York retailer to put the machine on test. The move proved to be enormously successful and a year later the NES was launched across Europe.



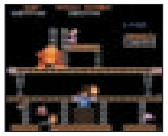
Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM *NES VERSION*



Classic Machine



MARIO FAMILY TREE

DONKEY KONG


- Arcade
- 1981
- Although *Donkey Kong* starred Nintendo's famous gorilla, the hero of this classic action game was a little man named Mario. His character traits had yet to be defined, but visually he was already the Mario we grew to know and love.

MARIO BROTHERS

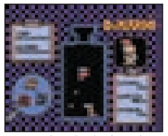

- Arcade
- 1983
- Returning just two years after *Donkey Kong*, Mario's second outing hinted at what was to come. Simple by today's standards, the game revolved around destroying pests that emerged from big green pipes.

SUPER MARIO BROS

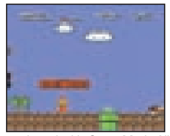

- NES
- 1985
- With sublime level designs and balanced gameplay, it wasn't surprising that *Super Mario Bros.* turned out to be a massive hit. Even today, this polished little title still stands up against more advanced examples of the platform genre.

SUPER MARIO LAND

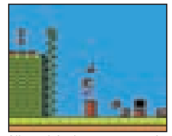

- Game Boy
- 1989
- Although this lacked much of the precision of the NES game, *Super Mario Land* was a superb demonstration of what Nintendo's new handheld format was capable of. A decent enough start, though the sequels were better.

DR. MARIO


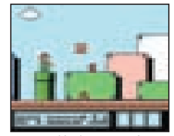
- GB/NES/SNES/N64
- 1990
- With *Tetris* being such an enormous success on the Game Boy and NES, it perhaps wasn't surprising that Nintendo would at some point take the formula and inject a bit of Mario into it. Multiple versions were released.

SUPER MARIO BROS 2/THE LOST LEVELS


- NES
- 1986
- *Super Mario Bros 2* was released in Japan a year after the original *Super Mario* game. Essentially more of the same, it was later packaged with *Super Mario All-Stars* and renamed *Super Mario Brothers: The Lost Levels.*

SUPER MARIO BROS 2/USA


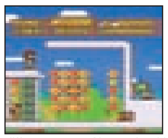
- NES
- 1988
- Originally released in Japan under the name of *Doki Doki Panic*, *Super Mario Bros 2* was actually a completely separate game into which Nintendo's characters were inserted. Players could play as Mario, Luigi, Princess Toadstool or Toad.

SUPER MARIO BROS 3


- NES
- 1990
- One of Shigeru Miyamoto's most accomplished projects, *Super Mario Bros 3* had so many unique gameplay features squeezed in that we can't even start to list them all here. It also used a map to link the levels together.

SUPER MARIO LAND 2: 6 GOLDEN COINS

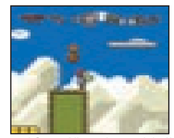

- Game Boy
- 1992
- With bigger sprites, more detail and improved gameplay, *6 Golden Coins* was a far more accurate representation of the *Mario* series than the original Game Boy offering had been back in 1989.

YOSHI'S COOKIE


- GB/NES/SNES
- 1992/93
- Again based around a *Tetris*-like core, *Yoshi's Cookie* was yet another example of Nintendo inserting its characters into different genres. Not as playable as *Tetris*, this was merely an okay game for Yoshi fans.

MARIO PAINT


- SNES
- 1992
- Packaged with a mouse, *Mario Paint* offered SNES owners a basic art and music program. Judging by its front end, you'd think this was aimed at younger players, though some of the functions were rather more complex.

SUPER MARIO WORLD


- SNES
- 1991
- The pinnacle of the *Mario* series, *Super Mario World* took the classic gameplay of its predecessors and reworked it with a clean, fresh art style and Super Nintendo special effects. Even *Mario 64* couldn't better this.

SUPER MARIO KART

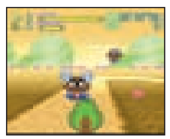

- SNES
- 1992
- *Mario Kart* may have started out as a spin-off (no pun intended), but went on to influence a string of copycat titles. With fun track designs and a sublime two-player battle mode, this was yet another SNES classic.

SUPER MARIO LAND 3: WARIOLAND

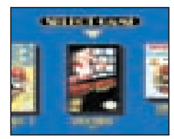

- Game Boy
- 1993
- Continuing Mario's Game Boy adventures, *Mario Land 3* was a little different in that it actually starred Wario. With many new gameplay innovations and fabulous graphics, this was a superb little game.

MARIO & WARIO

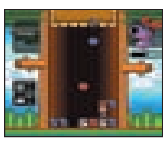

- SNES
- 1993
- One of Mario's less well-known adventures, *Mario & Wario* is a puzzle game in which the player needed to guide Mario, Yoshi or Princess Toadstool to safety using a fairy with a magic wand. Playable, but nothing special.

YOSHI'S SAFARI


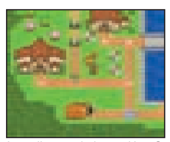
- SNES
- 1993
- It's no real secret that the SNES Super Scope was a bit of a flop, mainly due to a lack of decent software. Even this very lovely ooking Mode 7 Yoshi title couldn't save such a pointless piece of grey plastic.

SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS


- SNES
- 1993
- Featuring Marios *1, 2* and *3*, as well as *The Lost Levels* (Japan's *Super Mario Bros 2*), *Super Mario All-Stars* was superb value for money. Better still, each game had been upgraded with SNES-quality visuals.

WARIO'S WOODS


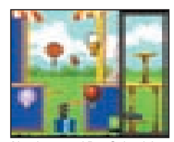
- NES/SNES
- 1994
- Yet another *Tetris*-inspired Nintendo game, this time starring Wario as well as a handful of other familiar faces. The aim here was to group different blocks together, before destroying them with falling bombs.

YOSHI'S OVEN


- SNES
- 1994
- A basic adventure game, the main premise of *Yoshi's Oven* was simply to explore the isometric worlds collecting each of the ingredients to bake cookies. Once located, the items were blended and put into, that's right, Yoshi's oven.

MARIO'S TIME MACHINE/MARIO IS MISSING


- NES/SNES/PC
- 1993
- Two edutainment titles developed by Microprose, these adventures took children around the world and through time. They're among a small selection of non-Nintendo Mario games, not all of which are included here.

MARIO'S EARLY YEARS


- SNES
- 1993
- Obviously aimed at the younger audience, these three titles were broken down into different themes – Fun With Letters, Fun With Numbers, and Pre-School. It was basically *Sesame Street* for Mario fans.

MARIO'S SUPER PICROSS


- Game Boy/SNES
- 1995
- In case you've never heard of *Picross* before, it's essentially a puzzle game in which the player must draw a specified number of pictures into squares across a grid. This was, as you'd expect, a version featuring Mario.

SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND


- SNES
- 1995
- Using the Argonaut/Nintendo-developed Super FX chip, *Yoshi's Island* was one of the last great SNES games. With lush, hand-drawn visuals and some of the best level designs ever created, this is what Nintendo was once about.

MARIO EXCITE BIKE


- SNES
- 1996
- Only available in Japan via the Bandai Satellaview, *Mario Excite Bike* was an update of the classic NES game featuring improved visuals and Nintendo's ever-growing cast of Mario characters. Great, for those who could get it.

SUPER MARIO RPG

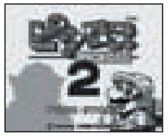

- SNES
- 1996
- Considering that Nintendo and Squaresoft had such a big falling-out over the N64, it's interesting that *Super Mario RPG* (a collaboration between the two companies) should arrive so late on the SNES.

WARIO LAND 2



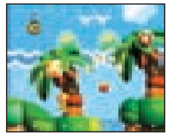
- GB/GBC
- 1998
- Now far more established as a character, Wario's second Game Boy adventure proved to be even better than the first. Interestingly, it was impossible to die, although you could get stuck in a dead end because the puzzles were tricky.

MARIO'S PICROSS 2



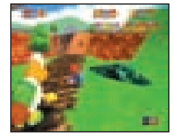
- Game Boy
- 1996
- Although *Picross* has never been that big over here, somebody somewhere must love it because Nintendo has developed loads of these titles over the years. This was essentially more of the same as in the first game.

YOSHI'S STORY



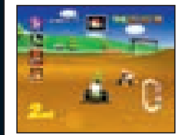
- Nintendo 64
- 1997
- Many were disappointed with *Yoshi's Story* – it was shorter and far less innovative than its predecessor on the SNES. Even so, this was a perfectly playable little game with some of the cutesiest 2D visuals ever created.

SUPER MARIO 64



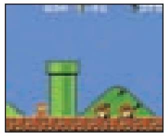
- Nintendo 64
- 1996
- As the grandaddy of 3D platform games, *Mario 64* brought so many new rules to videogames that it's still hard to comprehend them all even today. It's debatable whether or not it has ever been bettered.

MARIO KART 64



- Nintendo 64
- 1996
- While *Super Mario 64* was busy bringing new ideas to the world of videogames, *Mario Kart 64* was, unfortunately, taking them away. Lacking the design, innovation or sheer playablity of the SNES original, this was disappointing.

SUPER MARIO DX



- Game Boy Color
- 1999
- If you were looking for a reason to buy a Game Boy Color, this was it. Based on the original *Super Mario Bros*, this was infinitely playable in handheld format, and even included Japan's *Super Mario Bros 2* as a bonus.

SUPER SMASH BROTHERS



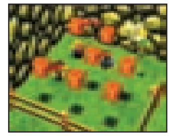
- Nintendo 64
- 1999
- It's no secret that *Super Smash Brothers* was lacking in the gameplay department, especially compared to other similar fighting games. But with Pikachu included along with the Mario Brothers, this was always going to do well.

MARIO GOLF



- GBC/Nintendo 64
- 1999
- It's perhaps not surprising that people see Nintendo as being for younger gamers when even its best sports games are built around Mario. Of course, this wasn't Mario's first game of golf, as Game Boy owners may well remember.

MARIO PARTY



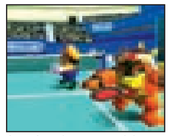
- Nintendo 64
- 1999
- While Sega was struggling to get the Dreamcast off the ground with games like *Virtua Fighter 3* and *Sega Rally 2*, Nintendo was reminding gamers what fun is all about with *Mario Party*. Simple? Certainly, but nicely executed.

WARIO LAND 3



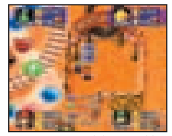
- Game Boy Color
- 2000
- Very much like its predecessor, *Wario Land 3* again demonstrated Nintendo's ability to create sublime level designs and innovative puzzles. This was structured so you had to play through more than once to get everything.

MARIO TENNIS



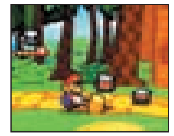
- GBC/Nintendo 64
- 2001
- As far as tennis games go, this was actually one of the better ones. Unfortunately, while the inclusion of Mario may have pleased fans, for other gamers it hammered home the fact that Nintendo games seemed to be aimed at kids.

MARIO PARTY 2



- Nintendo 64
- 2001
- The *Mario Party* series is always a great card to play in arguments about Nintendo's recent lack of innovation in games. While the first game was certainly something a bit different, this was more of the same multiplayer tomfoolery.

PAPER MARIO



- Nintendo 64
- 2001
- As one of the last big games for the Nintendo 64, it isn't really any surprise that hardly anyone ever played this. A pseudo follow-up to *Super Mario RPG*, this looked a little like an edutainment title for three-year-olds.

MARIO KART: SUPER CIRCUIT



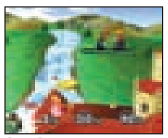
- GBA
- 2001
- Sitting somewhere between SNES *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64*, this helped to shift GBA hardware. Sadly, being somewhere between the SNES and N64, it still didn't manage to better the original game.

WARIO LAND 4



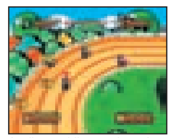
- GBA
- 2001
- The first three *Wario Land* games were, in fact, better than most of the Mario offerings in recent years. Sadly, while this retains the overall quality we've come to expect, it's by far the shortest game in the series.

SUPER SMASH BROTHERS MELEE



- GameCube
- 2001
- Lush graphics and myriad bonus features can't hide the fact that this is the N64 game all over again. Interestingly, this remains the only GameCube game to sell more than a million copies in Japan. Pokémon, anyone?

MARIO PARTY 3



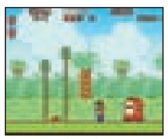
- Nintendo 64
- 2001
- Are you getting bored of this yet? There really isn't a whole lot more to be said about *Mario Party*, except that it's great fun for all the family, providing you have four pads, an N64, a copy of the game…

LUIGI'S MANSION



- GameCube
- 2001
- If you ever want proof that Nintendo has lost some of its magic recently then have a go at this. It's not awful, but it's hardly the sort of polished adventure game you'd expect at a Nintendo hardware launch.

MARIO ADVANCE



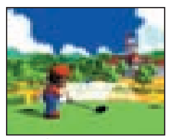
- GBA
- 2001
- With all the those Mario games in its back catalogue, it's interesting that Nintendo should choose *Super Mario Bros 2* for release first on the GBA. Great as it looks, this tends to be a real case of love it or hate it.

MARIO ADVANCE 2 & 3



- GBA
- 2002
- After releasing *Super Mario Bros 2* for GBA in 2001, Nintendo continued the *Advance* theme with the releases of *Yoshi's Island* and *Super Mario World* in 2002. Both converted well to the handheld format.

MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR



- GameCube
- 2003
- We gave it 8/10, and there's no denying that this was actually a really decent little golf game. A GBA version, entitled *Mario Golf: Advance Tour*, arrived in 2004 with link-up options between the two games.

MARIO PARTY 4



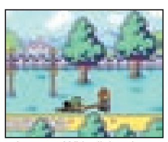
- GameCube
- 2002
- So, here we are again. Aside from nicer graphics and better sound, there was really very little to separate this from the N64 games. Ever playable, many gamers still rushed out to buy a copy of this at full price.

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE



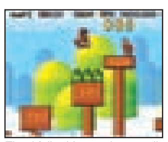
- GameCube
- 2002
- After the disappointment that was *Luigi's Mansion*, this really needed to be something special if it were to reassure gamers that Nintendo still had that magic. Unfortunately, this couldn't better *Mario 64*.

MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA



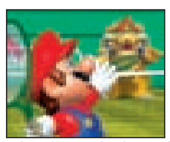
- GBA
- 2004
- Similar in style to *Paper Mario* on N64, *Superstar Saga* sees Mario and Luigi teaming up to solve some fiendish puzzles in this RPG adventure. With all the charm and characteristic style of other Mario classics, this is a terrific GBA title.

MARIO ADVANCE 4



- GBA
- 2003
- We're not sure why Nintendo should choose to release *Super Mario Bros 3* on GBA after *Yoshi's Island* and *Super Mario World*. Thankfully, this stands up well to the newer games thanks to its top gameplay.

MARIO POWER TENNIS



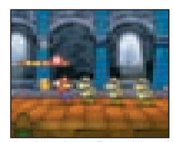
- GameCube
- 2005
- At the time of writing, not too much is known about this latest update in the *Mario Tennis* series, but we do know that the improvements are going to be more than just graphical. New modes, new game styles, more characters… should be good.

MARIO PARTY 5



- GameCube
- 2003
- *Mario Party 5* offers fans of the series even more of the same. If you've got three friends and three controllers handy then you'll no doubt have great fun. Hang on, didn't we say that about all the other *Mario Party* titles?

PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR



- GameCube
- 2004
- This sequel to the N64's *Paper Mario* is a great example of a sequel that takes the best bits of a title but makes enhancements in all the right places. Fans of the original will love its RPG stylings, newcomers should be entranced.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!



- GameCube
- 2004
- Although this rectifies some of the problems that *Mario Kart 64* had, it still fails to better the SNES original. At least this time round the track designs are decent enough, even if the multiplayer modes fail to impress.

THE MAN BEHIND MARIO
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

WHILE DEVELOPERS SUCH AS HIDEO KOJIMA AND PETER MOLYNEUX ARE NOW ENJOYING THE FAME THAT THEIR STAND-OUT CREATIONS HAVE BROUGHT THEM, ONE MAN HAS BEEN RECOGNISED IN GAMING CIRCLES FOR MUCH LONGER



Born in 1953 in Sonebe (a small town outside Kyoto, Japan), Shigeru Miyamoto grew up far away from the world of electronics that would later be such a prominent feature in his life. A keen musician and skilled artist, he spent much of his time exploring the countryside. His family didn't own a car or a TV, and as the nearest movie theatre was a fair distance away from his home, young Miyamoto would read books and draw cartoons.

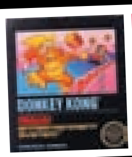
After five years of flitting between music and art, he graduated from college at the age of 24 but was still no closer to making a decision about his future. However, it just so happened that his father was friends with a man named Hiroshi Yamauchi – the CEO of a toy company called Nintendo. Yamauchi reluctantly agreed to interview his friend's son and Miyamoto was offered a job as the company's first staff artist – a position specially created to suit his skills and qualifications.

At that time, the toy industry was changing as computer technology opened up opportunities for more complex products, and in 1980, Yamauchi decided that a greater focus would be laid on electronic games. Miyamoto was teamed with Gunpei Yokoi to work on an arcade game featuring Popeye. Unfortunately, the Popeye licensing deal fell through, but Miyamoto continued working on the game, omitting Popeye and introducing his own characters – a barrel-throwing monkey and a little man. He called it *Donkey Kong*.

The game was a storming success and after working on a handful of lesser-known titles, Miyamoto was rewarded with his own development team in 1984. Called Joho Kaihatsu (or Entertainment Team), Miyamoto and his group of programmers and designers would go on to create such classics as *The Legend Of Zelda* and *Super Mario Bros*.

These days, Miyamoto takes a slightly less hands-on approach, preferring to produce rather than direct. but his creativity and input to current and past projects continues to inspire game designers in their work.

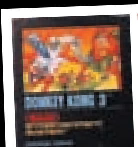
Miyamoto, we salute you.



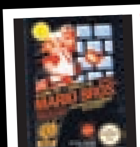
DONKEY KONG
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1983
Miyamoto's Role: Director



DONKEY KONG JR.
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1983
Miyamoto's Role: Director



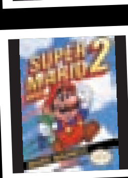
DONKEY KONG 3
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1984
Miyamoto's Role: Director



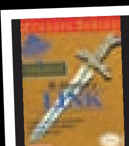
SUPER MARIO BROS.
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1985
Miyamoto's Role: Director



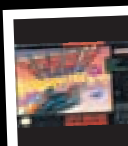
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
System: NES
Development Team: N/A
Released: 1986
Miyamoto's Role: Director



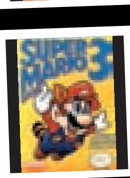
SUPER MARIO BROS. 2
System: NES
Development Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1987
Miyamoto's Role: Director



ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK
System: NES
Team: Joho Kaihatsu
Released: 1987
Miyamoto's Role: Director



F-ZERO
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1990/1991
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



SUPER MARIO BROS. 3
System: NES
Development Team: N/A
Released: 1991
Miyamoto's Role: Director



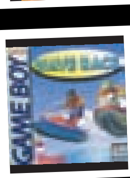
SUPER MARIO WORLD
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1991
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
System: SNES
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1991/1992
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



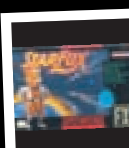
SUPER MARIO KART
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1992
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



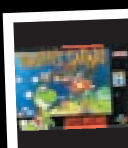
WAVE RACE
System: Game Boy
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1992
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



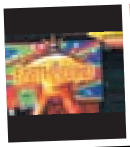
LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING
System: Game Boy
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1993
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



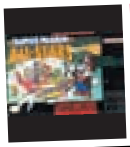
STARFOX
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1993
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



YOSHI'S SAFARI
System: SNES
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1993
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



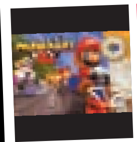
EARTHBOUND
System: SNES
Team: Hal Laboratory
Released: 1994/1995 (Japan/US only)
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



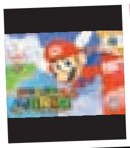
SUPER MARIO ALL STARS
System: SNES
Development Team: N/A
Released: 1995
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



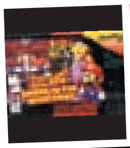
SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND
System: SNES
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1995
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



MARIO KART 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1996/1997
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



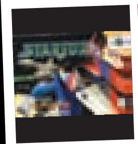
SUPER MARIO 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1996/1997
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



SUPER MARIO RPG: LEGEND OF THE SEVEN STARS
System: SNES
Team: Nintendo EAD/Squaresoft
Released: 1996/1997 (Japan/US only)
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



WAVERACE 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1996/1997
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



STARFOX 64
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1997
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



YOSHI'S STORY
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1997/1998
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



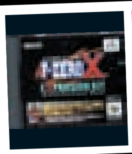
1080° SNOWBOARDING
System: N64
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1998
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



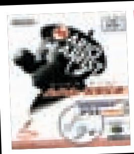
F-ZERO X
System: N64
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1998
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
System: N64
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1998
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
System: 64DD
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1999 (Japan only)
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



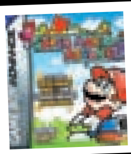
MARIO ARTIST
System: 64DD
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 1999 (Japan only)
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



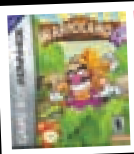
SUPER SMASH BROS.
System: N64
Development Team: Hal Laboratory
Released: 1999
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



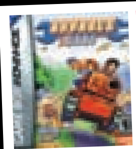
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK
System: N64
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2000/2001
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



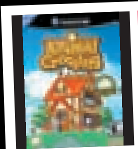
SUPER MARIO ADVANCE
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



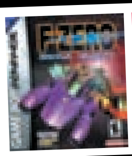
WARIO LAND 4
System: GBA
Development Team: Intelligent Systems
Released: 2001
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



ADVANCE WARS
System: GBA
Development Team: Intelligent Systems
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Supervisor



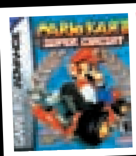
ANIMAL CROSSING
System: GC
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002 (Japan/US only)
Miyamoto's Role: Supervisor



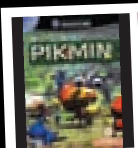
F-ZERO: MAXIMUM VELOCITY
System: GC
Team: ND Cube
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Supervisor



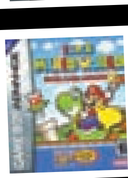
LUIGI'S MANSION
System: GC
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



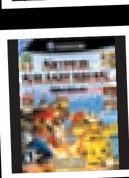
MARIO KART: SUPER CIRCUIT
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



PIKMIN
System: GC
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer/Director



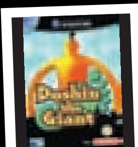
SUPER MARIO WORLD: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



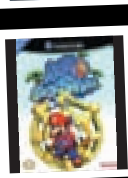
SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE
System: GC
Team: Hal Laboratory
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



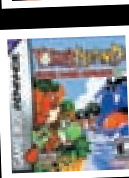
WAVE RACE BLUE STORM
System: GC
Team: NSTC
Released: 2001/2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



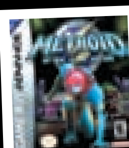
DOSHIN THE GIANT
System: GC
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



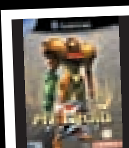
SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
System: GC
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



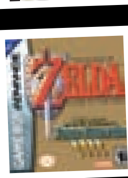
YOSHI'S ISLAND: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 3
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



METROID FUSION
System: GBA
Development Team: Nintendo EAD
Released: 2002/2003
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



METROID PRIME
System: GC
Development Team: Retro Studios
Released: 2002/2003
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ALTTP/FOUR SWORDS
System: GBA
Team: Nintendo EAD/Capcom
Released: 2002/2003
Miyamoto's Role: Producer



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
System: GC
Team: Nintendo EAD
Release Date: 2002/2003
Miyamoto's Role: Producer

HELP!

RETRO MICRO GAMES ACTION
Genius lookback





GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT...

Princess Tomato In The Salad Kingdom





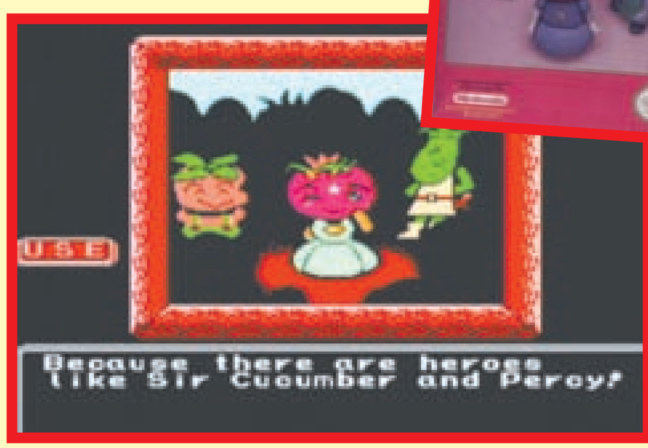
Format: NES
Release: 1988
Publisher: Hudson Soft
Developer: In-House

Don't judge a book by its cover' is a saying often heard when something is condemned solely on first impressions. This appears to be the cruel fate suffered by *Princess Tomato In The Salad Kingdom*, as Hudson Soft's NES curio was ignored on its release in 1988. The name isn't a big hit, but the game doesn't seem appealing when judged on other criteria either; the fights are extended bouts of 'paper, scissors, stone' and you spend much of the game trying to rescue a kidnapped fruit. Delve deeper, however, and it's clear there's more to this than meets the eye.

Princess Tomato is a graphic adventure where you fill the green shoes (or skin? flesh?) of Sir Cucumber. What noble deeds this vegetable has carried out in the past to earn his knighthood is never revealed, but in his immediate future Sir Cucumber has to traverse the Salad Kingdom to save Princess Tomato. No surprises there. You travel from screen to screen and choose what action to take by selecting a command from the side-bars, usually the customary commands 'talk' and 'use' enabling progress, but there are moments that require more peculiar commands, such as 'praise' and 'Percy'.

Percy is a baby persimmon you rescue at the beginning of your adventure and he tags along until the story reaches its conclusion. He has an annoying tendency to lose most of your items – something to do with a persimmon's lack of pockets, we imagine – so he makes up for it by offering advice, finding you items and having various contacts in the vegetable world. It's the only game we can recall where a vegetable's social circle can be used to your advantage, but Percy works well in this context, being sometimes essential to solving puzzles and always useful when you're stuck.

The tone throughout is childish without ever coming across as saccharine or insulting, the gentle, surreal humour appealing beyond its assumed young audience.



Names such as Mister Leek, Grapy and Uncle Peanut mask a game that's unexpectedly complex, with puzzles requiring plenty of exploration.

Sir Cucumber will also get caught up in a few scraps along the way, as not all fruit and vegetables can co-exist peacefully in the Salad Kingdom. As mentioned before, 'paper, scissors, stone' makes up the gloriously twee duelling. If you guess correctly against your opponent you then need to predict which way your opponent will look and point in that direction to secure the round.

The mazes prove a letdown, as the inclusion of essential items within these labyrinths becomes infuriating when you miss them first time round. Likewise, the locations are stretched to breaking point, with too much backtracking and double-checking (sometimes triple-checking) needed. So it's not perfect, but few games are. Instead, *Princess Tomato In The Salad Kingdom* is proof that games that appeal to children don't have to alienate adults – or indeed, children – with over-simplified, patronising gameplay. But that title eh? Absolutely dreadful.



GUN.SMOKE (NES) Capcom, 1988 – US Advertisement

SEGA Master System

SLEEK, POWERFUL AND AFFORDABLE – SEGA'S MASTER SYSTEM SHOULD HAVE BEEN A MARKET LEADER. IF ONLY IT HADN'T HAVE HAD TO COMPETE WITH THE NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM…

Sega hasn't had an easy time of it lately. Come to think of it, Sega hasn't had an easy time of it full stop. Even during the 16-bit era when the Mega Drive was selling fairly well the company was struggling to compete against Nintendo's domination of the market. Of course, the real battle had begun in 1986 with the release of the 8-bit Master System – a machine designed to go head-to-head with the NES. And if a console's success was purely down to its technical abilities, Sega would have been laughing…

Although on paper the Master System's specs didn't look especially impressive compared to those of the NES, closer inspection revealed that the CPU actually ran at double the speed, and, thanks to additional graphics chips, the machine could display more than twice as many colours. Master System games were, on the whole, far more vivid and vibrant than their NES counterparts. The only problem was that there weren't enough of them.

Having launched in the US and Europe a year previously, NES sales had been phenomenal – especially in America where gamers had been starved of quality titles since the games industry crash of 1983. The incredibly business-minded Nintendo had signed up a huge number of third-party developers to create games for its new machine, and a clause in the standard NES developer contract meant it was against the rules to convert NES games to any other format. Seeing as developers could make more money by reluctantly signing the contract and producing titles exclusively for Nintendo's format, few could afford to compromise their relationship by supporting Sega.

It wasn't all bad news for Sega, however. Though it achieved less than ten per cent of the worldwide console market share, in Europe the format was much better received. Not only was Nintendo's European marketing campaign somewhat below par, but the Master System's low price and colourful graphics helped to attract gamers. Retailing at just £99.99 (compared to the NES's £140 tag), the initial pack included two controllers and a *Hang On* game card.

The standard Master System design included a cartridge port and a smaller slot that took credit card-sized game cards such as the *Hang On* card included with the basic pack. These were generally more affordable than cartridges, though their limited amount of memory space meant that developers could only use them for small or simple projects. Predictably, as games were generally becoming larger and more graphically demanding, only a handful of titles were released on cards, and the format soon became redundant.

By 1991, with Sega in the process of introducing its 16-bit Mega Drive and the older machines really starting to show their age, the company released a new look Master System (pictured right) at a reduced price. Smaller and rounder than the standard design, the Master System II came with *Alex Kidd In Miracle Word* built into the hardware and retailed at £59.99. Other changes included the omission of the card slot and reset button, while the video output was fuzzier and rather less defined.

Despite the many hurdles that the under-supported Master System had to overcome, it introduced many youngsters to the world of videogames. And even though Sega's console never reached its full potential, the industry tends to look back favourably on the system and its collection of games.

"WHY I LOVE MY MASTER SYSTEM"

If the Master System were a man I'd have married it by now. Everything about it, from its sleek black and red cover to the chunky game cartridges, is pure perfection. Nothing has ever come close to its retro design, selection of peripherals (3D glasses anyone?) and choice of games. *Fantasy Zone, Alex Kidd In Miracle World, Psycho Fox…* Need I say more?

Liz Morris







The original Master System design remains the favourite with fans. Larger and blockier than the Master System II, the hardware featured a cartridge slot and a card slot for budget games.



Classic Machine

PERPLEXING PERIPHERALS

With hardware like this, it isn't really surprising that Sega is now a software-only company

CONTROL STICK

Featuring an enormous T-grip handle (which was supposed to make movement more precise), the Master System Control Stick was cumbersome and unintuitive. What's more, the buttons and the stick were reversed, making it great for left-handed gamers but practically unusable for everyone else.

HANDLE CONTROLLER

Designed with driving and flying games in mind, the Handle Controller wasn't a bad idea in theory, but in practice it was a bit pointless. There were few games that benefited from it, and the poor build quality meant that it was easily broken by enthusiastic gamers.

RAPID-FIRE UNIT

During the 8- and 16-bit days, companies seemed to think that those ghastly rapid-fire control pads were a good idea, but there were barely any games that were enhanced by them. Rather than releasing a rapid-fire pad that could at least be used as a second controller, Sega opted for a unit that gave gamers the opportunity to use rapid fire with their regular pads.

3D GLASSES

Although they were only compatible with eight games, Sega's 3D glasses were actually quite clever. By opening and closing shutters over the player's eyes, an illusion of depth was created. Unfortunately, they plugged into the card slot rather than the controller port, so weren't compatible with the Master System II.

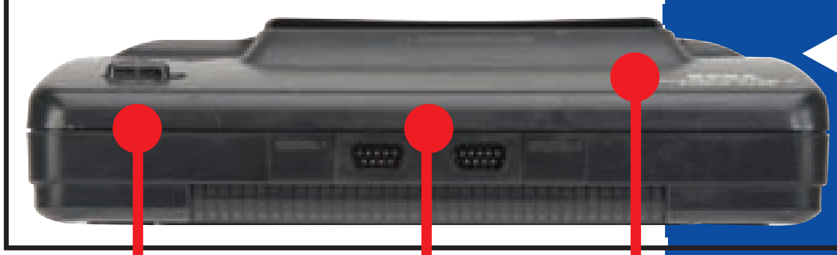
SPORTS PAD

Another of Sega's bizarre left-handed designs, the Sports Pad featured a tracker ball and two action buttons. Not only was it back to front, but there were so few compatible games out there that it hardly seemed worth it.

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU: Z-80 (8-bit)
CPU SPEED: 3.6MHz
MEMORY RAM: 64Kbit
VIDEO RAM: 128Kbit
RESOLUTION: 256x226
COLOUR PALETTE: 256
MAX COLOURS: 52
MAX SPRITE SIZE: 8 x 8
MAX SPRITES: 256
AUDIO CAPABILITIES: Three sound generators (four octaves each), one white noise
AUDIO OUTPUT: Mono
STORAGE: 32K game cards (MSI only), 32-512K cartridges

AROUND THE BACK



Although the Master System II was smoother and curvier than its predecessor, the hardware had been cut down to make it cheaper to produce. There was no longer a card slot for budget releases, and the video output was, surprisingly, fuzzier and less defined.

SEGA Master System



Classic Machine

POWER

OFF ON



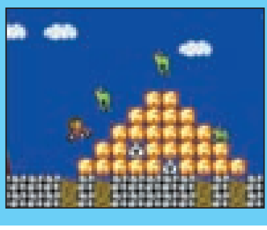
Six of the Best

The Master System may have been overshadowed by the NES, but Sega's stylish machine had plenty of great games to rival the top-selling titles on the all-conquering grey box. These are the best…

Alex Kidd In Miracle World

Publisher: Sega
Year: 1986

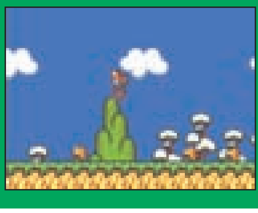
While NES owners enjoyed *Super Mario*, Master System fans made do with second best. *Alex Kidd In Miracle World* offered a similar platforming experience to *Mario*, and had plenty of unique features to elevate it above similar titles. If it wasn't for Nintendo we could be playing *Alex Kidd Sunshine…*



Psycho Fox

Publisher: Sega
Year: 1989

Psycho Fox shouldn't have been a good game. With all the *Aero The Acrobat*s out there, you'd expect this to be another throwaway platform game. But thanks to its innovative level design and tough yet rewarding gameplay, *Psycho Fox* was actually highly enjoyable. This hilarious adventure saw you out on a mission to defeat Madfox, who's as evil as foxes get.



California Games

Publisher: Sega
Year: 1987

Consisting of six extreme sports events, up to eight players could compete in turn, taking control of skateboards, bikes and even surfboards in this alternative sports-fest. All set in the glorious Los Angeles sunshine, this was a totally different experience from most Olympic-style games. And to think it was a decade before *Tony Hawk's*, too.



Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap

Publisher: Sega
Year: 1989

While *Wonder Boy* is a classic series, this is a little different from most instalments thanks to its RPG elements that enabled the hero to transform into six characters, each with their own abilities. Lizard Man, for example, could destroy enemies with his fiery breath, while Hawk Man could fly. Sadly, this superb game was ignored by many gamers.



Hang On & Safari Hunt

Publisher: Sega
Year: 1989

We don't often feature double packs in Six Of The Best, but we couldn't ignore this one Packaged with the system, *Hang On* was a great translation of Sega's arcade classic, offering the chance to get behind the handlebars of a super bike. *Safari Hunt* was Sega's answer to Nintendo's *Duck Hunt* and, thanks to the variation offered by the safari theme, many consider it to be the superior title.

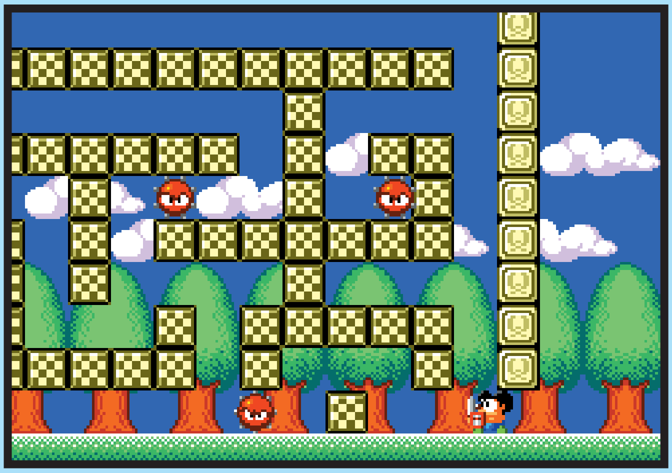


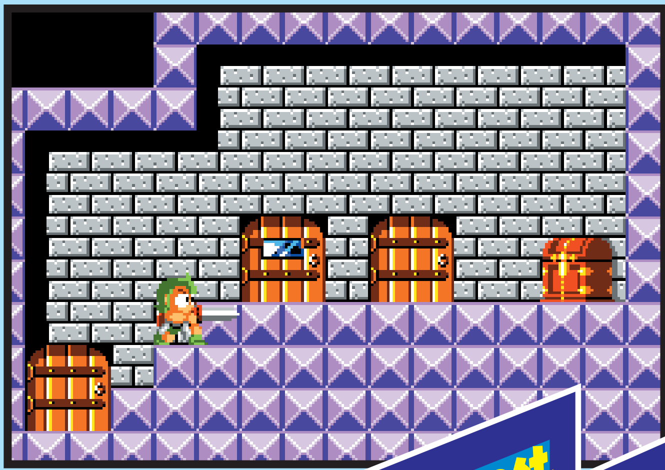
Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse

Publisher: Sega
Year: 1990

Although *Castle Of Illusion* started out as a Mega Drive title, the Master System conversion was a different game created just for the 8-bit console. The basic gameplay was virtually the same but, surprisingly, the level designs were a little more complex. It was also noticeably harder, which is strange seeing as the Master System was generally seen as being aimed at younger gamers.







W·O·N·D·E·R B·O·Y III

T·H·E D·R·A·G·O·N·S T·R·A·P

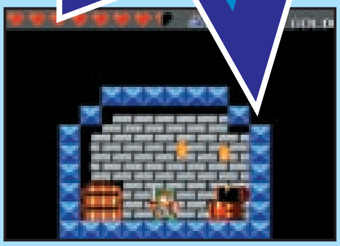
He may have started off life as a skateboarding, hammer-throwing hooligan, but Sega's Wonder Boy proved that not only was he made of much sterner stuff, but he could also give a certain Mario a run for his money. Eschewing the traditional platform elements of the original 1986 outing, the Master System's third *Wonder Boy* title was a glorious sprawling adventure that had more than a hint of RPG goodness.

Following immediately on from *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*, our intrepid hero had slain the evil Meka Dragon in order to restore peace to a ravaged Wonder Land. Unfortunately, defeating the dastardly reptile unleashed a curse that turned Wonder Boy into a miniature fire-breathing dragon (no doubt complete with a serious halitosis problem). Stoically receiving his new humiliating form, Wonder Boy quickly headed off through some wonderfully bright Day-Glo landscapes (which really showed off Sega's 8-bit machine) in order to track down Meka Dragon's various cousins and hopefully lift that curse once and for all.

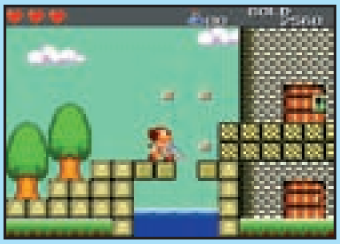
Unsurprisingly, things weren't quite that simple and a quick exploration of your surroundings soon revealed that various routes were blocked off. Fortunately, the demise of each impressive-looking but poorly animated Dragon you encountered enabled you to shift form into a variety of different animals, which in turn opened up those previously locked and tantalisingly out-of-reach paths.

Along the way, Wonder Boy was able to collect a variety of power-ups that let him annihilate an increasing array of oh-so-cute enemies, as well as collecting money to buy health and numerous items from the many shops that were dotted throughout the landscape. Add to this plenty of secret rooms, unlockable chests and those devious Dragons (not to mention an excellently designed game world) and it's pretty easy to see why this was rightly hailed as one of the best Master System games ever created.





▲ When Zelda met Mario? It's not what it seems…



▲ As the titular Wonder Boy you were able to adopt different guises to use a range of powers.

Animal Magic
Pick a form, any form…



Wonder Boy
Stout of heart and green of hair, you initially played Wonder Boy in the *Dragon's Trap* prelude. However, if you're sneaky like us, you simply used the We5t 0Ne password to unlock him.

Lizard Man
Don't let this cute-looking fellow fool you, as Lizard Man's fiery breath was a force to be reckoned with. You'd spend the majority of your time as Lizard Man, so you had to master his abilities quickly.

Mouse Man
Now this is more like it. Being able to stick to walls was Mouse Man's speciality and it came in extremely handy once you uncovered the Mummy Dragon's deadly pyramid.

Fish Man
With so much of Monster Land consisting of water – though strangely, each character could breathe in it – Fish Man's manoeuvrability became essential.

Lion Man
Unlike every other character in the game, Lion Man was able to use a nifty downwards sword swipe, making him essential for getting to those hard-to-reach areas.

Hawk Man
Though much weaker than his animal peers, Hawk Man's ability to fly through most of Monster Land was essential. Once he was unlocked, the end of the game was soon in sight.

Those Graftgold sorts were dream developers, responsible for a raft of great original titles and some of the finest conversions ever seen

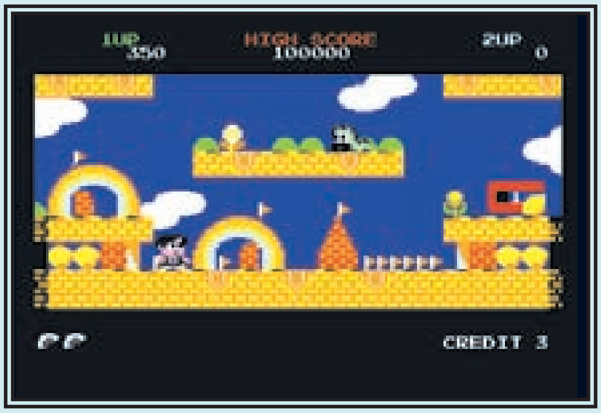
Graftgold Games

If you're not familiar with one of Graftgold's original titles, you'll have almost certainly played one of its conversions. The talented software house created original games such as *Uridium*, *Paradroid* and *Fire And Ice*, as well as superb ports of games such as *Flying Shark* and *Rainbow Islands*.

Graftgold started off as ST Software, named after programmer Steve Turner. Turner had struck a deal with Andrew Hewson of Hewson Consultants and began creating games such as *3D Space Wars* and *3D Lunar Attack*. Finding programming lonely work, Turner quickly turned to his friend Andrew Braybrook to help him out.

As royalties began to rise, Graftgold was created and quickly found success with *Paradroid*, *Uridium* and *Avalon*, while still keeping firm ties with Hewson. Eventually, Graftgold teamed up with British Telecomsoft and created a conversion of the excellent *Flying Shark* (a vertical scrolling shoot-'em-up). Unfortunately, legal troubles arose with Hewson over the rights to a couple of games that Graftgold had created, and though Hewson settled out of court it was the first of several run-ins for the firm. Although *Rainbow Islands* had been created when Graftgold was still at British Telecomsoft, disputes with Taito (the original arcade title's creator) meant that the game was released under the Ocean banner.

As conversion work dried up, Graftgold found it harder to stay afloat. Unable to create new products due to the expensive costs of PlayStation development kits, Graftgold closed its doors in 1996, 15 years after Steve Turner started creating games. We caught up with Steve to find out exactly what it was that made Graftgold great.



▲ *Rainbow Islands* was heralded as one of the all-time best Bub and Bob titles.



Paradroid



▲ Despite an Amiga update, *Paradroid* never made it to later systems. A shame really, as the mix of shooting and puzzling worked very well.

Paradroid **is classic 8-bit release that combines shoot-'em-up and strategy elements to create a wonderfully unique title. Controlling a prototype droid known as the Influence Device, you must clear a set of gradually more taxing decks of their droid hosts before they run amok.**

Droids could be destroyed by shooting or ramming them, or via a cerebral sub-game involving circuitry. Your droid also had a limited sense of its surroundings, and was not able to see through walls or around corners. With many of the decks being several screens high this gave a pseudo-3D outlook to a 2D game.

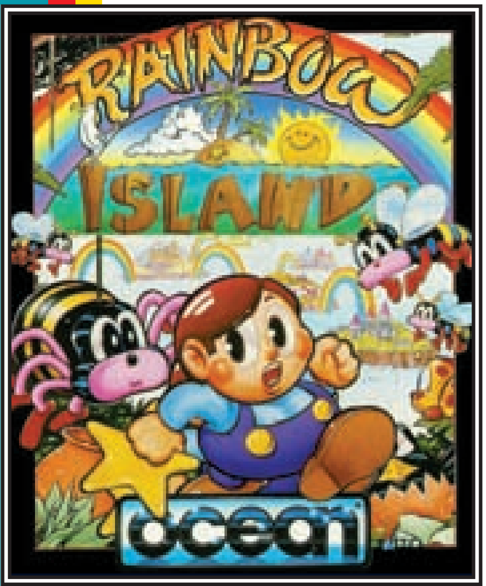
Paradroid **received an Amiga update in 1990 (*Paradroid 90*) that had more of the intense gameplay that had served the C64 so well.**

Rainbow Islands

Arguably one of the greatest conversions ever completed (across all formats too, we might add), *Rainbow Islands* was without doubt one of Graftgold's greatest achievements. After successfully being turned back into humans, *Bubble Bobble*'s Bub and Bob found themselves in the titular Rainbow Islands. Being rather unstable, each island was slowly sinking into the rising sea, so you had to use your handy ability of creating rainbows to make your way to the goal at the top of each island which was several screens tall.

Like its predecessor, *Rainbow Islands* was extremely addictive and had a great theme tune (in this case a jazzed-up version of *Somewhere Over The Rainbow*) that perfectly suited the pace of the game. Although players took alternate turns, there were plenty of hidden bonuses (capturing monsters in rainbows and then destroying them would release one of seven rainbow gems) to ensure that there was plenty of pleasure in beating your opponent.

Like *Flying Shark* before it, *Rainbow Islands* was a huge licence that would not normally have been given to a development company of Graftgold's size. The end result, however, was utterly superb and a testament to Braybrook and the rest of the talented team. It's perhaps fitting that the Saturn and PlayStation versions of *Rainbow Islands* were the last conversions Graftgold made before it finally closed its doors.



▲ Bub (or is it Bob?) and Bob (or, er, Bub, obviously) are now known for their *Super Bust-A-Move* titles.



An Interview With…

Graftgold co-founder Steve Turner

Q: How did you start programming?

A: I started out at school. The first computer I programmed was a desk-sized machine with 512 bytes of core memory. Programs were loaded onto paper tape and had to be translated to another tape. Then you had to feed in a whole reel of paper tape to run your 'object' tape. The answer was then typed onto a Teletype machine. The programs did things like work out the first 10 square numbers.

Q: How did your partnership with Andrew Braybrook come about?

A: I met Andrew when a mutual friend heard he had programmed some games that ran on an IBM mainframe. As we had a couple of these at the insurance brokers where we worked, we tried to get a copy of one of the games running. Unfortunately, it came on a box full of punched cards and we didn't get far.

Q: Do you still keep in touch now?

A: Andrew works with me at a firm that programs insurance systems, so it's turned full circle for us, as that's where I also originally came from.

Q: What was your ethos for making games, and who was your inspiration?

A: We made games that we personally wanted to play. We weren't in it for the money – that was a bonus. We hardly had any cheats in our early games; we played them start to finish for real and enjoyed doing it. We play-tested everything ourselves to get the ultimate tuning. Our inspirations were other pioneers who were



▲ Steve Turner (right) and Andrew Braybrook are the brains behind *Rainbow Islands*. We're not worthy, and so on.

pushing the edge – people like Jeff Minter, Archer Maclean and the guys at Ultimate.

Q: What was your favourite machine to work on and why?

A: I loved the Spectrum because it was very accessible. There wasn't much hardware to learn and the software techniques were everything. Whoever wrote the best algorithms basically got the best results. Nowadays, you have to rely so much on hardware and other peoples' systems that it's hard to superdrive a machine.

Q: How long would it take you to port a game to various machines?

A: We got very good at porting, especially our own stuff, which was written to be portable – we could do a first draft of our later stuff in two days. However, making it fly on another machine took much longer. To reach commercial quality our fastest ports were ▷



▲ The Mega Drive, perhaps more than any other 16-bit system, was inundated with licensed platformers, so it's perhaps not surprising that *The Ottifants* isn't that fondly remembered today.

about six weeks, with better ones taking considerably longer, perhaps a year.

Q: *Rainbow Islands* was one of the best universal ports ever made. Did you realise it was something special during development?

A: We knew we could do better than most of the ports we had seen. The average quality was poor and being done in a hurry by bedroom programmers. I think we could have made a bigger splash with a game someone had heard of. All the big ports went to conversion developers who churned them out for big fees. I think we showed them how to do it properly.

Q: How much easier was it to work on the 16-bit machines?

A: The main difference was being able to compile and save the game using the actual machine. It's so much easier developing when you can press a button and know you've saved your source to disk, rather than having to wait up to five minutes to tape a copy that might not even load. By the time the 16-bit machines arrived we were compiling on PCs and downloading to the 8-bits. That made programming easy for a while but it didn't last long. With 16-bit, the support software available just got better and better. We gave up writing our own debuggers and loaders so we could spend more time writing the games.

Q: And how did you find the eventual transition to consoles?

A: Consoles were very similar to the 16-bits, especially the Amiga as it had lots of hardware to assist you. The Sega systems used the same assemblers, and we could use a Sega version of the same development system. The real difference we found was blowing ROMs rather than having to simply deliver on disks (that was a pain). Dealing with the console licensor as well as the publisher also took more artistic control away from us. They had their own ideas and made sure you adhered to them even if you had more experience in making the correct game decisions.

Q: Your later titles didn't do as well as *Uridium* and *Rainbow Islands*. Do you think the magic got lost?

A: We still had the magic, but things had moved on. What the commercial industry praised were bigger, more expensive products that didn't seem to rate the gameplay. Even with 16-bits the emphasis was on better graphics rather than better gameplay. Movie sequences also stole the limelight. Huge publishers and development teams were in a better position to deliver

The Ottifants

The Ottifants marked a big change in direction for Graftgold. Safely under Sega's wing, it was asked to create a game based on a new German cartoon.

Although initially assured that *The Ottifants* (a story about a bizarre family of elephant-like creatures) would receive massive exposure and become the next *Simpsons*, the series performed poorly and never reached half the countries it was intended to. As a result, Graftgold was left with a licensed game that lacked the pulling power to sell (it didn't help that *The Ottifants* itself was far from one of Graftgold's best products).

Taking on the role of baby Bruno, you had to negotiate a series of colourful levels and collect what looked like elephant-shaped Jelly Babies. Gather enough and you could move onto the next level. Despite its impressive cartoon visuals, the game suffered in numerous departments: Bruno was a complete bugger to control and would constantly slide around as if he was on ice; many of the jumps and obstacles were particularly hard to negotiate (leading to numerous frustrating deaths); and Bruno himself was a far from appealing character (although, admittedly, this wasn't Graftgold's fault).

Ultimately, however, it was Sega's strict schedule that became *The Ottifants*' undoing. Producing a *Sonic* rival in only three months was an impossible task and in the end, the game suffered greatly.

▼ Graftgold was assured *The Ottifants* would be bigger than *The Simpsons*, which was a really cruel trick…



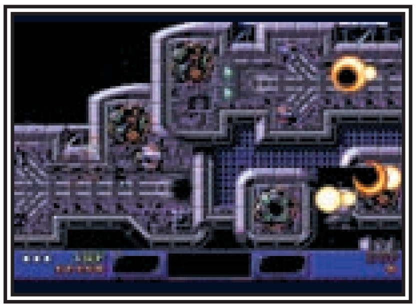
Uridium

There's little doubt that the fast-paced *Uridium* was a game that separated the men from the boys when it first launched on the C64 in 1985. Forget about multiple weapons or sophisticated add-ons; your Manta ship just had a simple set of lasers and a steady hand was needed to keep your prized ship in one piece.

Each level took place above a huge mothership (known as a Dreadnought) and not only did you have to shoot down waves of enemy fighters, you'd have to navigate the heavily armoured Dreadnoughts as well. If all that wasn't enough, you also had to deal with numerous homing mines that would quickly zone in on you at the first opportunity.

Although it was eventually converted to the Amstrad CPC 464 and Spectrum, it was the C64 where *Uridium* really excelled. Smooth scrolling, some lovely chunky visuals and an absolutely rocking soundtrack combined to create an amazing experience that still holds up today.

A frantic two-player option made for some great grudge matches and few could resist the chance to go back and beat that latest high score. *Uridium* received a C64 update in 1986 and a full-blown sequel on the Amiga in 1993. The NES's *The Last Starfighter* was *Uridium* too – just with a film licence and a new main ship.



▲ *Uridium* is one of the shooters we'd love to see updated for today's systems. How about it, Steve?



these, and after spending millions on them would then spend equal amounts on advertising to con the world that's what they should buy. Funny, I don't hear anyone saying: "Do you remember the movie to such and such?" It's like the crowd who cheer the emperor's new clothes.

Q: Were the old days better?

A: The pioneer days of the games industry were very special. You could start out with hardly any outlay, finish a game in six weeks and sell enough to keep you going for a year. It didn't last long before the suits took over, but those early days had a great deal of freedom for a programmer. New game genres were invented all the time and you weren't expected to fit a commercial mould. I think there is room for that pioneering to go on away from all the big triple-A products controlled by the publishing giants. At the moment, there isn't an easy machine for people to experiment on. You need to use operating systems that constantly change rather than take over the machine.

Q: How difficult was it to keep Graftgold going? Is there anything you would have done differently?

A: Everything's easier with hindsight. What I most regretted was not getting into publishing when it was a cottage industry. The small publishers who survived sold out to larger publishers for a fortune. Owning at least a stake in a publisher would have let us keep artistic control. There's nothing worse than to see a good product get spoilt by bad decisions from a publisher.

Q: What was your favourite Graftgold game?

A: *Dragontorc* was my personal favourite. Of Andrew's, I think *Paradroid* is a masterpiece of design.

Q: What games do you wish you had worked on?

A: I am great fan of Sid Meier and would have loved to have been a part of *Civilization*. My other wish would to be part of the *Doom* team. They were pioneering at a time when most games were following set patterns.

Q: What are you up to these days?

A: I've been at the same firm with Andrew since Graftgold disappeared. After all the turmoil of trying to keep a company going, it was a well-earned rest that paid well. I've now been there five years – I'm in the research and development team.

Q: Would you ever be tempted to come back to the industry?

A: I do consider it now and then but with my kids at university my priority is a stable job. The games industry is a stormy sea. I am ready to rejoin the industry for the right company – I no longer want to run a company, just create great games.

Fire And Ice

Cool Coyote may not have been one of the best known game characters of all time, but at least he managed to appear in a decent game before he went to retro videogame heaven. Debuting on the Amiga, *Fire And Ice* was an incredibly colourful jaunt that had Cool traversing a range of typical platform locations – vibrant forests, deep under the sea and even precarious snow-covered mountain ranges.

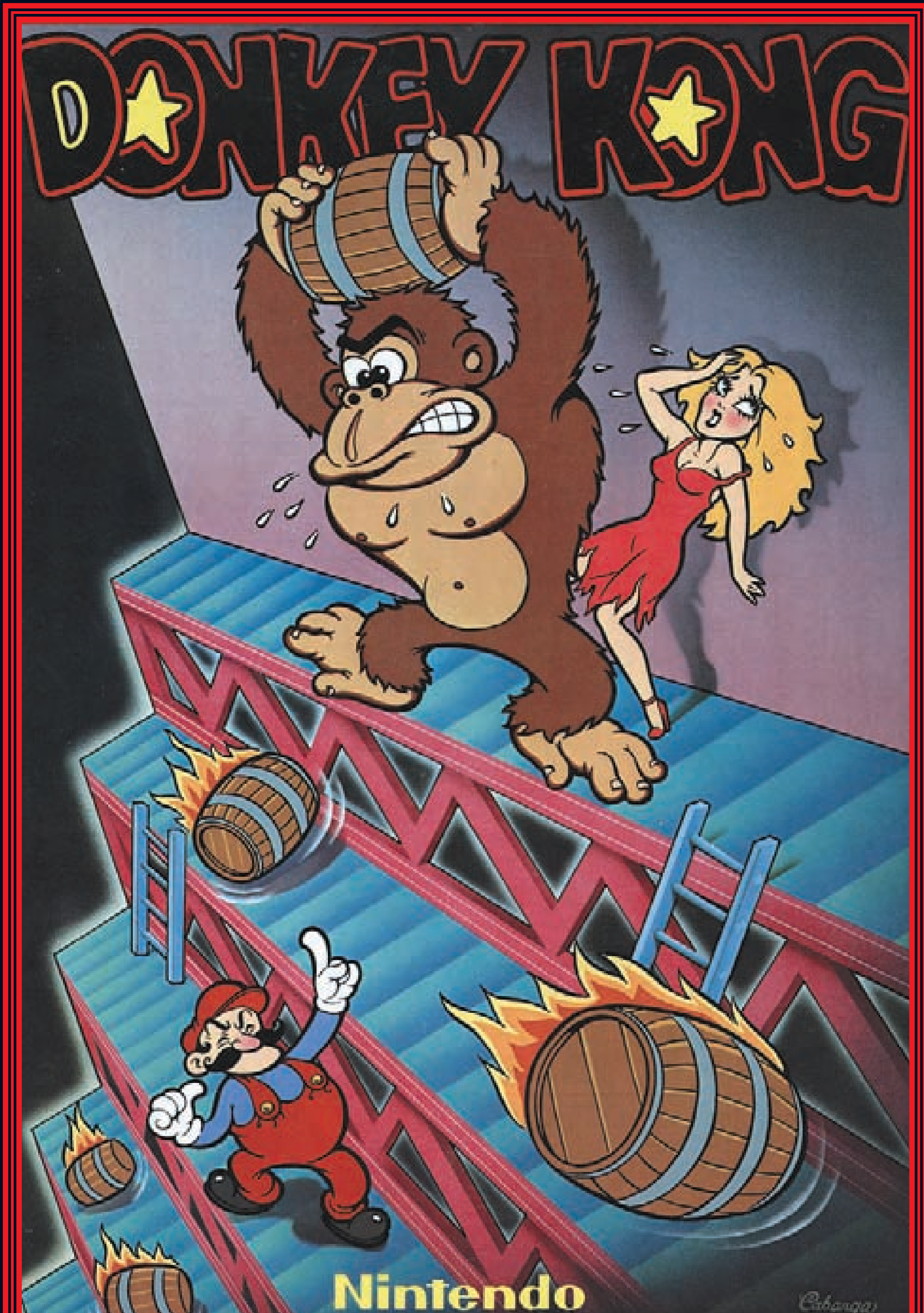
Despite not being that memorable, Cool had a rather nifty way of defeating the various enemies that were scattered about the many beautifully drawn levels. The coyote could fire ice pellets at his many opponents, eventually causing them to freeze over. Once this had been achieved, walking into the now frozen form would shatter it. Certain enemies would then drop a frozen fragment of the key that was needed to unlock the next level. Fortunately, the missing pieces were always hidden randomly throughout the sprawling levels, meaning that it wasn't just a simple case of memorising each location.

Fire And Ice had plenty of secrets scattered around its many levels and managed to appear on various other systems including the Master System, PC, Game Gear and the ill-fated Amiga CD-32. Graftgold also developed a finished version for the Mega Drive, but disputes between Virgin and Renegade (the game's publishers) meant it was never released


POW00
ENEMY
$00190



I ain't afraid of no ghost... **The Legend Of The Mystical Ninja – SNES [Konami] 1991**



DONKEY KONG (Arcade) Nintendo, 1981 – Original Arcade Flyer

RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION

LET BATTLE COMMENCE

With the arrival of the 16-bit systems computer games were becoming huge and we found ourselves caught up in computer and console wars. While there has always been fierce competition within the industry, the battles really hotted up with the arrival of the Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Super Nintendo and Sega Mega Drive.

Sonic proved to be a huge advantage for Sega and a careful balance of great games and extremely canny marketing saw Sega pulling away from Nintendo and winning this particular round of the console wars. Nintendo wouldn't be beaten, though, and as it slowly gained popularity it began to release some amazing games for its NES successor, many of which simply weren't possible on Sega's machine.

A similar war was being fought on the home computer front, and while each machine had its own merits the Commodore Amiga eventually proved to be the more popular choice. Even though Sega, Nintendo, Commodore and Atari were at each other's throats, it proved to be a huge benefit to gamers, as the choice of games available was superb. *Super Mario World*, *Speedball 2*, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Lemmings*, *Street Fighter II* and *The Secret of Monkey Island* were just a few classics that we're still playing today, and they feel as fresh as ever.

16-Bit





Retro

Classic Machine

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

"WHY I LOVE MY SNES"

The SNES isn't so much like your first girlfriend, but it was definitely the first girl to let you put your hand up her jumper. You knew Nintendo made great games – it had proved that with the brick-like NES – but this time it made games that took over your life. Out were the basic sprites and in was pseudo-3D gaming (thanks to Mode 7) prompting countless 'My one's better than your one!' arguments up and down the country. The SNES was the Escort XR3i to the Mega Drive's Capri: the Capri was there first, but the XR3i was more go and less show.

Steve Takle

PROBABLY THE GREATEST CONSOLE IN THE WORLD… EVER

For many, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (or SNES to its chums) was, and remains, the best games console ever released – the successor to the NES and direct combatant of the 16-bit wonder, the Mega Drive.

It launched in Japan on 21 November 1990 (it hit the US in September 1991 and Europe in April 1992) along with the highly anticipated *Super Mario World* and *F-Zero* (another classic in the making). In Japan, demand for the new console rose to near fever pitch – so much so that Nintendo had to deliver the shipments of consoles at night for fear that the rumours that yakuza gangs might hijack the lorries to sell the consoles on the black market would prove true.

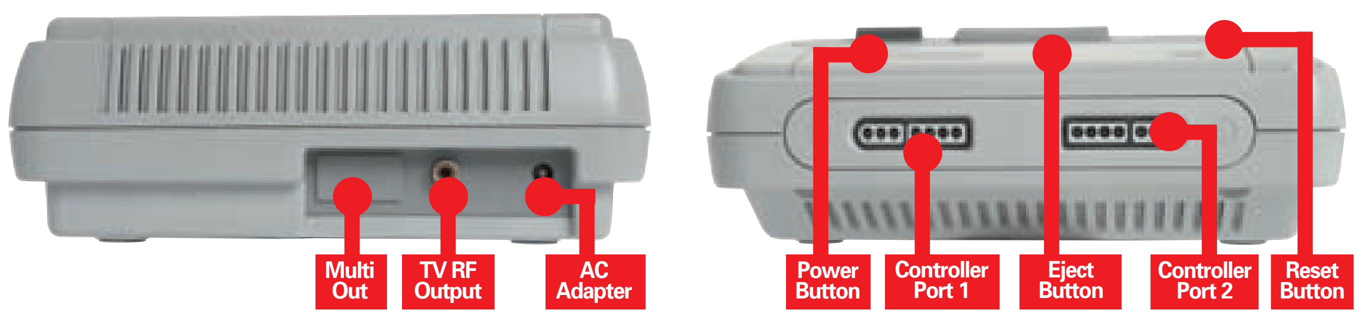
Though the SNES was incredibly successful, it was nowhere near as popular as the NES, which sold upwards of 50 million units in the US alone. The reason for this was twofold: on one hand, the success of the NES meant that gamers were reluctant to give up their old console for the SNES (exacerbated by the fact that Nintendo had decided that it would be too expensive to make the SNES backwards compatible with NES cartridges); then there was the fact that pretty stiff competition from the Mega Drive ensured that sales, while good, were unimpressive when compared to those of its predecessor.

Nevertheless, the SNES is an enduring favourite due to the sheer variety and quantity of games available. Whatever your gaming predilections you could be sure that Nintendo's gaming delight had it covered. The list is endless, but it's hard not to go all moist-eyed at the fond memories of such games as *Secret Of Mana*, *Street Fighter II Turbo*, *Contra III*, *R-Type III*, *Darius Twin*, *StarFox*, *Pilot Wings*, *Super Bomberman*, *Super Castlevania* and countless others. What's more, all of the above and the hundreds we have omitted are every bit as playable today as they were then.

The design of the console (certainly the European and Japanese models) is elegant and the joypad is still functional, if a little basic when compared with the sleeker Mega Drive pad. But of all the retro videogames systems, this is the one that any self-respecting gamer simply has to have.



AROUND THE BACK…





KEY GAMES

Picking great games that appeared on the SNES is like shooting fish in a packed-to-capacity barrel. Choosing everyone's favourites is quite another matter…

SUPER METROID

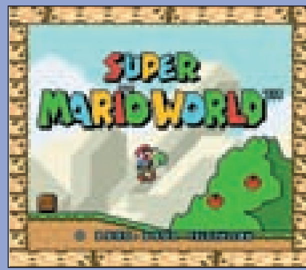
Super Metroid once more places you in control of Samus, who has taken the last living Metroid hatchling to the Ceres Base to allow scientists to study it and harness its powers for the benefit of mankind. Naturally, things don't go to plan and upon receiving a distress call from said base Samus hot-foots it back to find an escaped Metroid, lots of dead scientists and, of course, Mother Brain in robot form up to no good. Brilliant gameplay fused with some atmospheric visuals and sound effects ensured that this game went down in history as being more than a bit good.





SUPER MARIO WORLD

Until recently, you simply couldn't launch a Nintendo console without a *Mario* title and the SNES was home to a corker. Considering that the Mega Drive was already very successful (due to being launched the previous year), *Super Mario World* had to be the kind of killer app that would draw gamers back to the Nintendo fold. Thankfully, Miyamoto delivered one of the most satisfying gaming experiences to date. Although it drew heavily from its predecessors, the marriage of the gaming elements along with finally giving Mario a cape (confirming the plumber as the superhero that we knew him to be) proved to be one of the most satisfying *Mario* titles to date.



▲ The finest *Mario* game to date? We reckon. And while you may disagree, you're clearly wrong.

SUPER MARIO KART

This game was responsible for blistered thumbs the world over and doubtless many premature deaths of SNES pads. *Super Mario Kart* was a racing game that pitted you against all your favourite characters with added Nintendo fun. Of course, racing as Mario, Luigi et al was the hook but it was the combination of power-ups, precision control and, most importantly of all, the two-player game that proved irresistible to gamers. In fact, many of those who have enjoyed *Mario Kart* maintain that it is the superlative instalment of the series. *Super Circuit* might have been enjoyable, but even the souped-up *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* on the Cube didn't match the sheer genius of the original game.



▲ Proof that you don't need a fancy coin-op cabinet to make the best racing game ever.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN SO DIFFERENT…

In a peculiar twist of fate, it was Nintendo that was partly responsible for bringing Sony into the world of videogames. From 1988 onwards, Nintendo courted the skills of Sony regarding a disc-based add-on for the SNES. Over the years, Nintendo flitted from Sony to Philips and back again until deciding to dispense with the idea altogether, due possibly to concerns regarding piracy (always a major concern for Nintendo, particularly with the N64 and GameCube) and the dismal performance of the Mega CD.

Thanks to this dalliance, Sony, clearly not wishing to waste the time and resources spent developing the add-on, went on to develop something called the PlayStation. At a time when Nintendo had something like a 70 per cent share of the videogames market, some wondered whether Sony could challenge the combined might of Nintendo and Sega. Little did they know…

Nintendo

SUPER NINTENDO

ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM



Classic Machine

POWER



Rising Sun Retro

YOUNG GIRLS, ANTAGONISTIC FISH AND A HELL OF A LOT OF ELASTIC – IT COULD ONLY BE A JAPANESE GAME…

U•M•I•H•A•R•A K•A•W•A•S•E

Format: SNES
Release: 1994
Publisher: TNN
Developer: In-House

With Sonic the Hedgehog and a certain Italian plumber proving extremely popular, Nineties developers insisted on jumping on the platform bandwagon. While many titles were predictable carbon copies that displayed none of the imagination or creativity of the games that inspired them, a few managed to define their own niche in what was becoming a saturated market. TNN's *Umihara Kawase* was one such game.

Those expecting a traditional platformer will get a shock, as *Umihara* contains a surprising amount of puzzle elements – and is all the better for it. Taking on the role young girl Umihara Kawase, you must travel through a variety of abstract levels while avoiding a range of sea life. Unfortunately, Umihara isn't too athletic and must rely on her elastic rope in order to negotiate each level. Fitted with a handy fish hook, the rope is a way to gain reach inaccessible platforms and also doubles as a weapon.

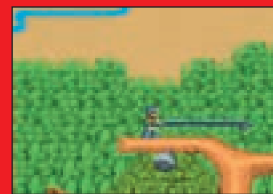
What makes *Umihara* really stand out is the impressive physics that have been applied to the rubber rope. Hook a platform, walk in the opposite direction as fast as you can, then watch in amazement as near perfect physics send you hurtling back to your original position, only to slowly swing to a perfect stop once all the tension has left your rope.

While watching Umihara and her rope in motion is sheer poetry, you'll need skill and experimentation in order to achieve the best results. Fortunately, a demonstration at the start of each stage gives you a few hints for the level ahead, and you'll soon be swinging through *Umihara*'s elaborate stages like a girl possessed.

Even after you've learned the most rudimentary techniques there are still plenty of lovely touches that will make you thank your local importer for this eccentric but horribly addictive game. Hook a fish and pull it off an opposite platform and its bulk will cause Umihara to slide to the end of her own platform and take the full weight of the dangling seafood. Little touches like this are littered throughout the game and really let you appreciate how much thought has gone into this extraordinary title.

Of course, *Umihara* isn't without its faults, and frustration will prove to be the biggest killer. Rest assured, though, if you persevere you'll discover a game that's as deep as the many stretches of water that Umihara can fall into.

It's typical that a game as unique and as enjoyable as *Umihara Kawase* never got a western release (neither did the two PlayStation sequels), but you really do need to track this little beauty down. Trust us – you'll never look at a fishing rod in the same way again…



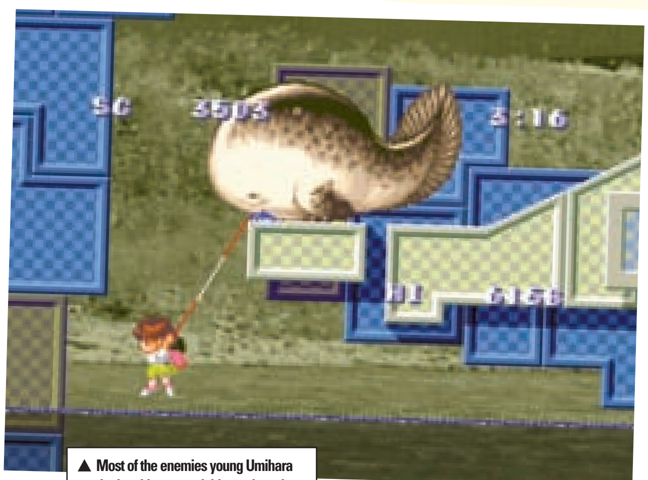
KINGS OF THE SWINGERS

Umihara isn't the only videogame character to negotiate levels by swinging through them…

Bionic Commando
(*Bionic Commando*)
Having a telescopic arm is great, especially when it allows you to access previously out-of-reach areas.

Samus Aran
(*Super Metroid*)
Certain areas of Zebes consist of huge gaping chasms, but Samus can use her Grappling Beam to swing across them with ease

Simon Belmont
(*Super Castlevania IV*)
Parts of Dracula's castle need some handy whip skills in order to clear them. You've been warned…



▲ Most of the enemies young Umihara deals with are much bigger than she is. Does Childline know about this?



GREAT GAME BOSSES

SUNSET RIDERS

Format: SNES, Mega Drive
Release: 1993
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-House



It's the old cliché of videogames that the best way to defeat bosses is to learn and memorise their attack patterns. It almost goes without saying that a few lives or credits will be wasted as you experiment to discover the ideal tactics, then commit their attack pattern to memory and strike accordingly.

The Smith Brothers stick out as a memorable boss battle because they could be beaten on the first attempt via nimble fingers and ingenious use of the environment without dumbing down the difficulty. No memorising of attack patterns required at all. Well, not if you're a good enough…

The fight took place in a bar where the top-hat-wearing brothers had taken three women hostage. One brother was on the top-left balcony throwing grenades at you while the other sat on the opposite balcony chucking lanterns that set the ground on fire. The trick to this fight was the swinging chandelier between the duo, which you could hang from or jump onto.

You needed to climb the chandelier to get a clear shot at the villains anyway, who were otherwise guarded from your bullets by some surprisingly sturdy 'Saloon' signs. However, you had even less time to react to the grenades and leaping flames when you were on top of the chandelier, and retreating back to the floor below was the only route back out of trouble. A deft juggling act between the top of the chandelier and the relative safety of the ground was required to succeed, along with some nifty gymnastics to keep out of harm's way.

As this fight didn't rely on memorising attack patterns, a diverse amount of tactics could successfully be brought into play – slide along the floor, hang from the chandelier or improvise and rely on reactions? The Smith Brothers encounter was a blueprint for future boss fights if ever we saw one.

HAVEN'T WE MET BEFORE?

ALUNDRA AND THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

Developers borrow (well, steal) ideas from games all the time; titles often appear that are a blatant imitation of a previous, often superior product (especially if said product sold exceptionally well). Every now and then, however, a new title appears that not only uncannily matches a previous game, but is sometimes just as good – *Alundra* is one such title.

When it first appeared on the PlayStation in 1998, *Alundra* entranced gamers with its traditional, beautifully drawn 2D sprites; an engaging story (Alundra could walk into people's dreams); and its simple yet effective real-time combat. Despite its fresh look, which was a world away from the countless 3D RPGs already available on the system, older gamers knew that they'd seen all this somewhere before.

Even a cursory glance at the visuals was enough to convince 16-bit gamers that *Alundra* shared more than a few graphical similarities with the SNES's excellent *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*. Upon sitting down with *Alundra* it was clear that Working Designs (creators of the superb *Land Stalker*) had not only created a title that could well have been a continuation of the *Zelda* franchise (had it shared the same licence), but one that occasionally improved on its 16-bit peer.

The inclusion of a jump button added a further perspective to the many (often hard) puzzles found throughout the game, but it was the story that really made *Alundra* feel like a step up from Link's SNES adventure. Epic and sweeping, it was a world away from the twee and rather flimsy story of *A Link To The Past* – although it, in turn, was superseded later in the year by Link's N64 debut, *The Legend Of Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time*. Still, it was a superb imitation for those who could find it and was only ruined by its diabolical sequel; but we'll leave that for another day…







▲ These pictures are a perfect example of the similarities between these two titles; it's just a shame Contrail didn't copy *Ocarina Of Time* for the sequel.

S·U·P·E·R M·A·R·I·O W·O·R·L·D

Greatest RETRO Game Ever





Format: **SNES**
Release Date: **1992**
Publisher: **Nintendo**
Developer: **In-House**

FORGET THE GREATEST RETRO GAME EVER, THIS COULD WELL BE THE GREATEST GAME EVER, FULL STOP

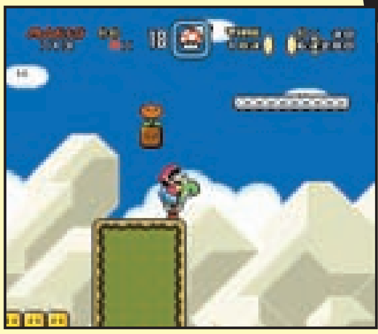
When Nintendo launched the SNES in 1992 it needed to prove that its new technology was worthy of our attention. And what better way to do that than by ensuring that a healthy selection of quality games were available to buy alongside the machine. Classics such as *F-Zero* and *Super Soccer* were included in the line-up, though it was Nintendo's much-loved plumber who undoubtedly attracted the most attention.

As the fourth game in the *Super Mario* series, *Super Mario World* certainly had its work cut out. The original game had been adored by gamers everywhere, while the third instalment had wowed the industry with its impressive technical achievements and sheer size. Amazingly, Nintendo managed to better every single element seen in the first three games by a significant margin.

Although on first impressions the game looked much like its predecessors (albeit with nicer sprites and more colours), it didn't take long to discover that Shigeru Miyamoto and his team of artists and programmers had used the SNES technology to implement a number of quirky gameplay features. One of the most memorable technological achievements was sprite scaling and how it was used to enhance the boss encounters. This varied between rotating the characters as they moved around the room, or rotating the platforms they stood on, either in the style of a ferris wheel or a seesaw. The seesaw sections were particularly ingenious, as they required the player to stomp on the boss's head only when the platform tipped towards the lava, causing them to slip off. Such features may seem simplistic now, but at the time the effect was breathtaking.

It wasn't just the technological side of the game that was impressive either – the design 'concept' was of an equally high standard. Rather than drawing everything in the sort of eye-catching detail that some SNES games were displaying, Nintendo purposely kept things clean and fresh. Distant hills, trees and other background elements were hinted at with simple geometric shapes, while closer scenery was highlighted with slightly busier, abstract patterns. This look was complemented by the clever use of colour; soft, pastel shades were used for much of the scenery, while more vibrant tones were used for the foreground.

But aside from all this wonderful creativity, it was the tried-and-tested *Mario* gameplay that shone through above all else. Although Nintendo is known for innovation, *Super Mario World* brought very few new gameplay features to the platform genre. Instead, the game was more a collaboration of all the best bits of



▲ Platforms, power-ups and, er, small dinosaurs. The quintessential ingredients for a *Mario* game.



▲ Familiar enemies from previous *Mario* titles showed their faces again, and some were bigger than ever.

the previous *Mario* titles, perfectly blended and used in just the right quantities. The world map, for instance, was beautifully realised yet still incredibly functional, while each of the levels featured just the right number of secret exits and collectable items.

Of course, *Mario 64* would eventually eclipse the level of hype and coverage that *Super Mario World* received – after all, it was hard not to be impressed with what Nintendo achieved in its first ever three-dimensional platform romp. Even so, there's no real dispute as to which was the superior game. *Super Mario World* offered far more replay value, as well as more precise gameplay, more levels, better power-ups and a more rounded difficulty setting. In fact, it's one of around half a dozen or so SNES games that we continue to enjoy even now.

The sad thing is that when you compare such sublime game structure to Nintendo's recent offerings, such as *Luigi's Mansion* and *Super Mario Sunshine*, it's hard not to feel that the company has lost a little of its sparkle.

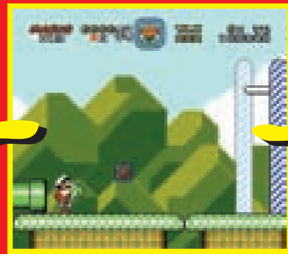
Mario Maths

With so much to offer, it's hard to pick out the individual ingredients that made Super Mario World such a wonderful game. But here are a few of the choicest cuts…

Start



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The World Map

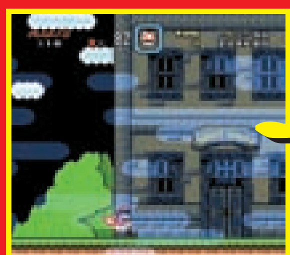
Like *Super Mario Bros 3*, *Super Mario World* featured a map that linked all the levels together. Like so many other sections of the game, this was kept simple and functional, allowing the player to maintain a clear idea of their exact position in Dinosaur Land. And who could forget names like Cheese Bridge Area?

Abstract Imagery

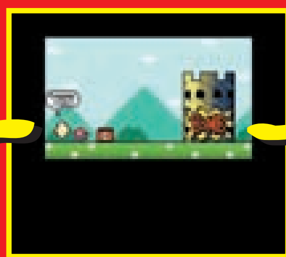
Almost all the scenery in *Super Mario World* was abstract in design. Mountains, forests, castles and haunted mansions were drawn using simple shapes, colours and patterns. Contrary to what you might expect, though, the game still looked vibrant and full of life, rather than appearing bland.

Power-Ups

Although *SMW* featured fewer power-ups than *Super Mario Bros 3*, those that did exist were far better implemented and more integral to the gameplay. The Cape, for instance, was particularly memorable and required a certain level of skill to master, especially when it came to reaching secret platforms.



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Classic Mario

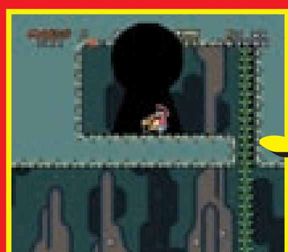
Many of the popular characters and locations seen in previous *Mario* games were resurrected and updated for *SMW*. Ghost Houses, for example, contained hundreds of hovering Boos, as well as the Big Boo himself. And just look at those lovely transparency effects. Mmm, transparency…

Bowser's Back

Still keeping things simple, the storyline told of how Princess Daisy had been kidnapped by Bowser (again). No genius gimmicks, no unnecessarily complex scripting, just enough of a plot to carry Mario's platforming antics from one area of Dinosaur Land to the next. Who needs tricksy cut-scenes, eh?

Super Effects

Although *Yoshi's Island* would later take the SNES technology to its limits (with a little help from the Super FX chip), *Super Mario World* certainly did a good job of showing what the Super Nintendo was capable of. Sprite scaling was used sparingly to subtly enhance many of the boss battles.



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Finish



96 Exits

Many of the levels featured multiple exits that opened up secret areas and additional levels on the map. In all there were 96 exits, some of which required a huge amount of skill from the player to find. It was also possible to get to Bowser's castle in about 15 minutes if you knew which exits to look for.

Jolly Green Dinosaur

Yoshi was introduced in *SMW* and has since become one of Nintendo's most popular characters – he's even starred in his own games. Although his presence did little to enhance the gameplay, it was nice to see another 'goody' joining Mario.

Gaming Perfection

So there you have it. With all these elements (as well as many others) *Super Mario World* is possibly the greatest game ever. Perhaps Miyamoto should have played through this again before arming Mario with that ridiculous water cannon.

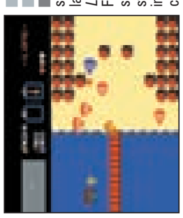
Retro

ZELDA FAMILY TREE

While many of today's popular franchises have stemmed from the PSone generation, a few classics still stand their ground amongst the likes of *Crash Bandicoot* and *Tomb Raider*. The best-known ones seem to come from Nintendo – whether it's *Mario*, *Donkey Kong* or *Zelda*, Nintendo is the undisputed champion when it comes to creating long-lasting brands and characters.

Of course, it's Mario that's most synonymous with the company, though in recent years the *Zelda* franchise has received the most attention, most probably because of the noise that *Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* made when it finally launched on N64 after a delay. So which is your favourite? Take a look at the *Zelda* family tree to refresh your memory. You may even find a few titles that you didn't even know existed…

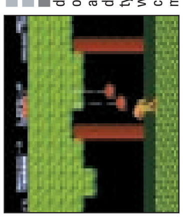
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA



1986
NES
Nintendo

Every great series has to start somewhere and for *Zelda* it was with launch of *Zelda No Densetsu* (*The Legend Of Zelda*) on Nintendo's Famicom Disk System. Because it was seen as something of a financial risk, the system never launched outside Japan – instead the game was translated to cartridge and released on the NES.

ZELDA: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK



1987
NES
Nintendo

While *The Legend Of Zelda* had laid down the foundation for almost every other *Zelda* title, the second game attempted to take the series in a slightly different direction. Rather than the typical *Zelda* viewpoint, much of this title was *Mario*-esque 2D platforming – a change that proved to be unpopular with many fans of the original.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST



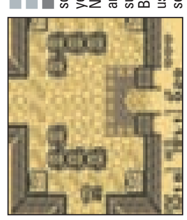
1991
SNES
Nintendo

Nintendo needed to demonstrate that the Super Famicom (Super Nintendo Entertainment System in the west) was superior, both in terms of technology and software, to Sega's Mega Drive, and it certainly did that with the resurrection of the *Zelda* series. A huge, sprawling RPG, *Zelda: ALTTP* is considered by many to be the best game in the series.

HANDHELD

PHILIPS

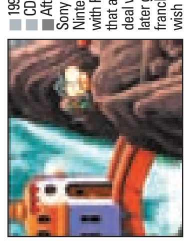
LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING



1993
GB
Nintendo

While much of the Game Boy's initial software was fairly simplistic, a few years of using the technology had given Nintendo enough knowledge to create an RPG. *Link's Awakening* was surprisingly good considering the Game Boy's limitations – even successfully using the odd side-scrolling section as seen in *The Adventure Of Link*.

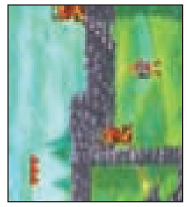
LINK: THE FACES OF EVIL



1993
CD-i
Philips

After cancelling its agreement with Sony to create a SNES add-on, Nintendo promptly signed a similar deal with Philips. But it was soon decided that an add-on was a bad idea and this deal was also cancelled. Philips was later given temporary use of the *Zelda* franchise as compensation. Oh, how we wish it hadn't been…

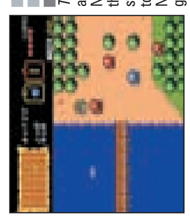
ZELDA: THE WAND OF GAMELON



1993
CD-i
Philips

While the title *Faces Of Evil* described how *Zelda* fans looked when they saw what Philips had done with Link, they were even more horrified when they saw how Zelda was portrayed on the CD-i. A Barbie-like heroine in a pink miniskirt may have seemed like a good idea to Philips, but for us things couldn't have got any worse… or could they?

BS THE LEGEND OF ZELDA



1995
SNES
Nintendo

Based on the original NES *Zelda*, *BS The Legend Of Zelda* was only ever available in Japan and only on Nintendo's Satellaview – a SNES add-on that linked with a Japanese television system called GIGA and allowed users to download playable games. Sadly, Nintendo shut down the system before gamers could get the last instalments.

ZELDA'S ADVENTURE



1995
CD-i
Philips

If you thought that *Faces Of Evil* and *Wand Of Gamelon* were bad then you'd have been utterly disgusted with this. Although Philips' initial *Zelda* creations featured appealing artwork like that in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* games, *Zelda's Adventure* was realised through poorly rendered CG sprites and back-grounds, and live action cut-scenes. Ugh.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING DX



■ 1998
■ GBC ■ Nintendo
■ Although this was essentially the same as the Game Boy version of *Link's Awakening* (released five years previously), a number of amendments had been made. Obviously, there was the inclusion of colour, but more impressive was the way it was used to enhance the game using colour-based puzzles. There was also an extra dungeon.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME



■ 1998
■ N64 ■ Nintendo
■ With seven years since the last big *Zelda* game, Nintendo had a lot to prove. Many things had changed during that time – including the introduction of 3D graphics – and it was unclear whether the classic *Zelda* formula would work as well as before. Thankfully, after numerous delays, the game managed to surpass almost everyone's expectations.

OTHER GENRES

SUPER SMASH BROTHERS



■ 1999
■ N64 ■ Nintendo/Hal Laboratories
■ Just like Marmite, *Super Smash Brothers* was one of those games that you either loved or hated. Either way, no-one could dispute that this was a massive success for Nintendo, partly because so many of Nintendo's favourite characters were included. As well as Mario, Donkey Kong and a range of Pokémon, Link was among the line-up.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK



■ 2000
■ N64 ■ Nintendo
■ Although *Majora's Mask* was overseen by *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto, much of the creative process was handled by a then new team of upcoming designers and programmers at Nintendo of Japan. This, combined with a relatively short development period, raised doubts about the game's quality, but it was great anyway.

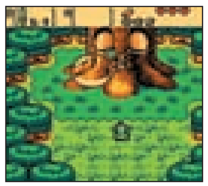
CAPCOM

LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES



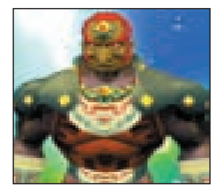
■ 2001
■ GBC ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Nintendo's current ties with Capcom and the *Resident Evil* series may have stemmed from *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons*, as they were both created by Capcom, rather than in-house. Sharing many similarities with *A Link To The Past*, *Oracle Of Ages* used time travel to introduce puzzles and themes as the game progressed.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF SEASONS



■ 2001
■ GBC ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Contrary to what you may have heard, *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons* were two completely different games. While *Ages* used the theme of time travel to introduce many of its puzzles, *Seasons* used different times of the year to similar effect. By switching between Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn, various routes and secret items were revealed.

SUPER SMASH BROTHERS MELEE



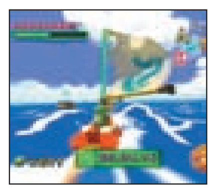
■ 2002
■ GC ■ Nintendo/Hal Laboratories
■ Aside from some very nice visuals, *Super Smash Brothers Melee* was really nothing more than an update of the N64 original. Again, there was a heavy emphasis on Pokémon (which is undoubtedly the reason why *SSBM* is still the best-selling GC game in Japan) and again Link appeared, this time with Ganondorf, Zelda and Sheik.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: LTTP/FOUR SWORDS



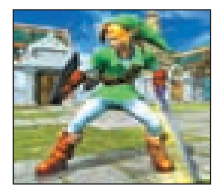
■ 2003
■ GBA ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Thanks to the versatility of the GBA, Nintendo has been able to resurrect the SNES classic *A Link To The Past*. The best part is that not only do you get a carbon copy of the original game, but you also get a brand new four-player link-up game, developed by Capcom exclusively for Game Boy Advance, in which you and three friends work co-operatively.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER



■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo
■ Although some gamers had reservations about the cartoon imagery used in the latest *Zelda* game, few could deny that Nintendo has once again created a must-have title. While the *Zelda* series has often featured the theme of time travel, *The Wind Waker* uses the wind and the ocean as a basis for many of its puzzle and explorative elements.

SOUL CALIBUR II



■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo/Namco
■ When Nintendo first demonstrated its GameCube technology, it did so with a beautifully crafted fight scene between Link and his arch rival Ganon. Although the imagery was never used in a finished Nintendo product, a rumour suggested that Namco would feature a similar rendition of Link in the 'Cube version of *Soul Calibur II*. And it was true.